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LANE, JOHN DEWEY. "SINGLE VISION." (1973) Directed by: Dr. Robert Winthrop Watson. Pp. 158

If there is ambivalence in the title poem of this thesis, "SINGLE VISION," then it is the result of inadequate empirical information provided by irrelevant measuring devices from a technology whose capability remains somewhere this side of infinity. By imposing empirical limits on things of this world such as poems and photographs, a potential other-world is precluded. Precluding those things outside of the empirical precludes "spherical vision" and limits seeing to the one perspective of "single vision." The two facts, that this thesis contains poems and photographs, and that it is sectioned into six general parts, is a reflection of my own interpretation of the material of this thesis, and my own interpretation is a function of "single vision." By preceding most of the poems with carefully selected, printed, manipulated photographs, I have imposed my own evaluation and decisions concerning the intrinsic, as well as superficial, aspects of the poems and photographs. Some "combinations" which work toward a mutually intrinsic level of expression may seem related only on the surface level. But in these pairings, it is hoped that a much stronger relationship may evolve expressing an intrinsic convergence of meaning. Other combinations of poems and photographs may seem to have little in common on the illustrative level. Usually several photographs precede a single poem, though in a few instances one photograph will precede and converge quintessentially with the essential meaning of several poems which follow it.

It is not improper here to use a mathematical analogy for the intended relationship between poems and photographs, abstract as the bond is anyway. Since my undergraduate minors are math and physics and since I have frequently used analogies from these realms for the poems contained in this thesis, a description of the pertinent aspect of "set theory" is appropriate here. The "universal set," which grade school children are all familiar with today, is the relevant mathematical entity. If "poem" is a "set" and "photograph" is a "set," then the intersection of two or more of these sets, "contained" graphically within circles, defines the "universal set" — that portion of each set which occurs in the common set of overlapping circles. This "universal set," defining the intrinsic commonality of poem and photograph, is an important concept in the organization and contents of this thesis.

The intrinsic relationship can be carried to an extreme readily if nothing but atoms can be found in the depths of this material — atoms, which are definable under the million-power stare of the electron microscope. But there are things contained here which elude the electron microscope, and which have probably, more often than not, eluded me.

I "name" the six sections of "SINGLE VISION" surreptitiously, and intentionally nebulously, here: Part I — "In a place between body and God;" Part II — "Dislocations of reality;" Part III — "What is the life-impetus, after sustenance?"; Part IV — "One door into two rooms;" Part V — "Masking the symptoms of a soul;" and Part VI — "What remains for those who are gone?" If there are excesses in this thesis, then I give thanks to my tasteless youth, which in no way augurs the conformity of the years to come.

APPROVAL PAGE

This thesis has been approved by the following committee of  
"SINGLE VISION"  
the Faculty of the Graduate School at The University of North  
Carolina at Greensboro.

by

John D. Lane

Oral Examination  
Committee A Thesis Submitted to  
the Faculty of the Graduate School at  
The University of North Carolina at Greensboro  
in Partial Fulfillment  
of the Requirements for the Degree  
Master of Fine Arts

Greensboro  
1973

April 25, 1973  
Date of Examination

Approved by

Robert Watson  
Thesis Adviser



# APPROVAL PAGE

This thesis has been approved by the following committee of the Faculty of the Graduate School at The University of North Carolina at Greensboro.

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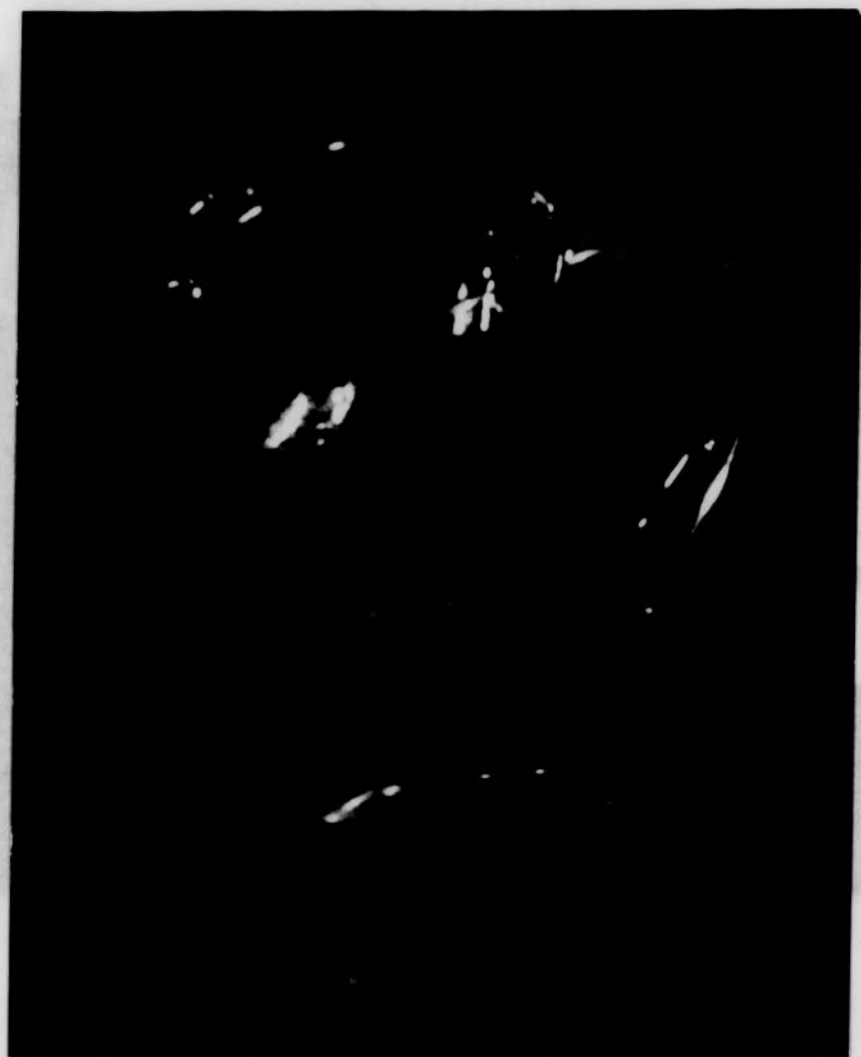






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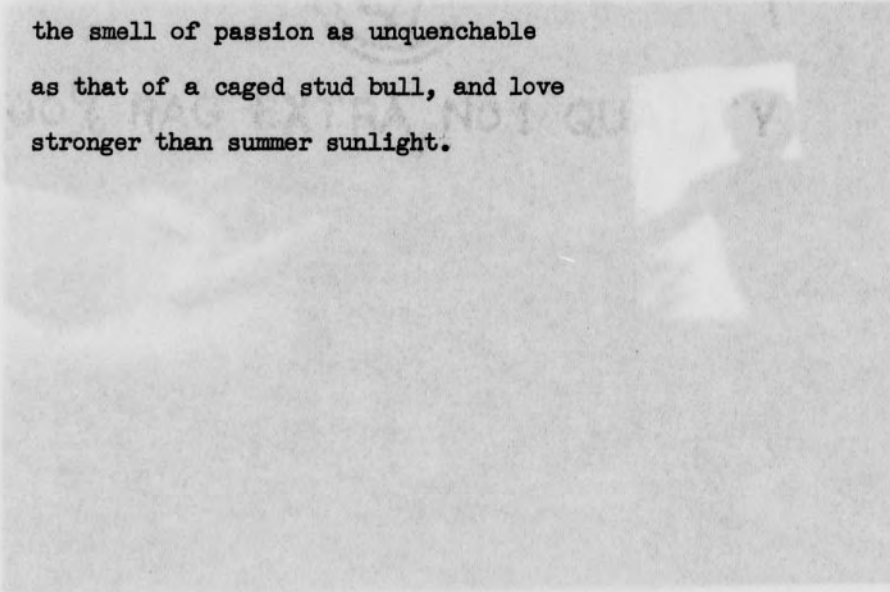
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 (3) The third of the series  
 (4) The fourth of the series  
 (5) The fifth of the series

## LUCUBRATIONS

A mystery has often  
eluded me in dark places,  
and I have probed  
by candlelight, and spoiled  
a cask of wine to study  
an illimitable power, and  
procreator of passions and art,  
and devils that juggle babies  
in the night. There is  
substance and warmth like  
thrusting a hand in a hot spring  
to grasp the bowels of the earth.  
And there is fear like the  
whimper of a baby yanked  
from darkness to the light, left  
alone to understand the suddenness  
of sunset. And surely I have  
discovered health and vitality,  
like the young bodies of girls  
bathed in long scented showers.  
Yet there is the lurking evil of  
shadowed alleys,

with the guilt of the penitent,  
or the indifference of hewn  
granite set down on a corpse.

But there is in the damp dark  
the smell of passion as unquenchable  
as that of a caged stud bull, and love  
stronger than summer sunlight.

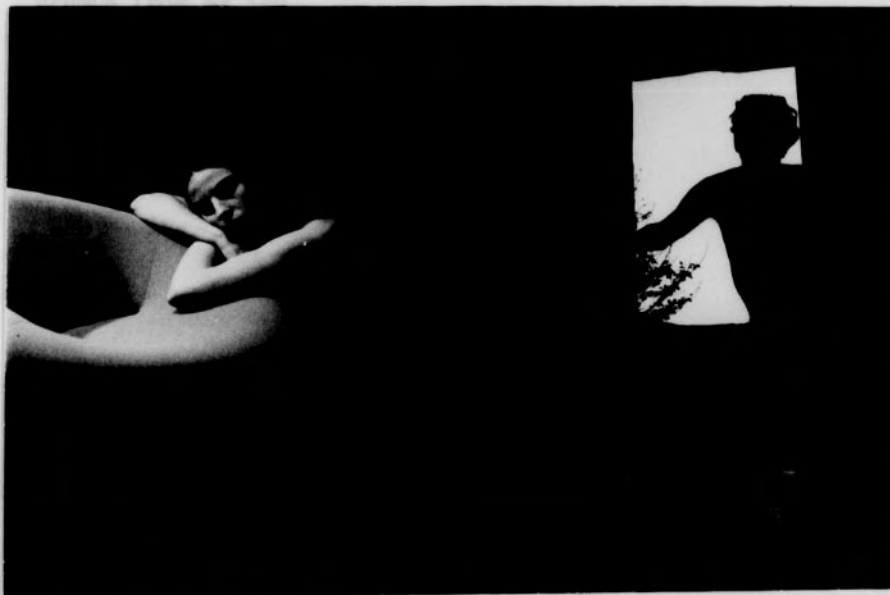




THE END OF SPARKS

Parchment light

Red Harvest trailing back



Where won't the green want love?

When in the mind

the arid containers of ourselves,

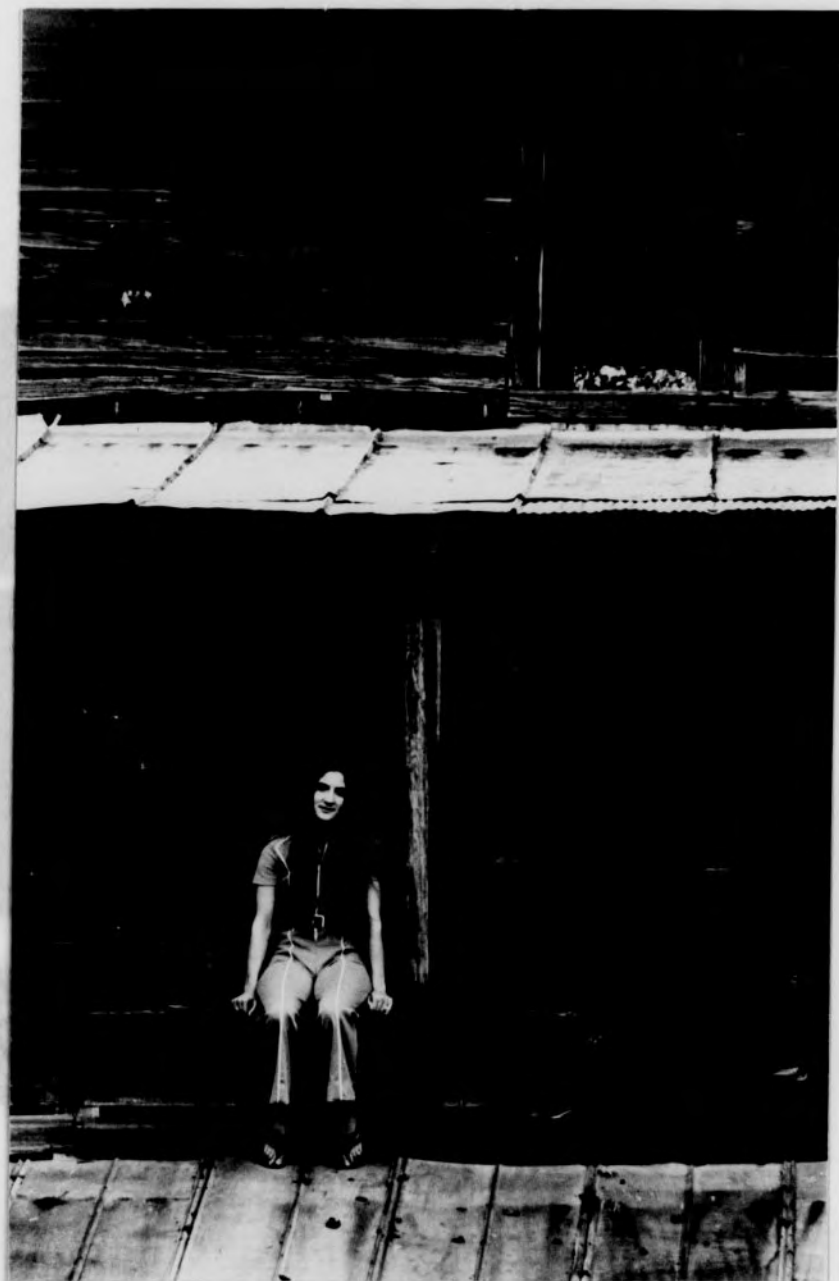
the words, tumbling and stumbling

into your earth, into my sky.

## THE END OF SHELLS

Parchment light  
Shed harvest trailing bread--  
crumbs from my lap  
Drought time from our window  
slipping down down down into  
thin sheets between us  
Coming old through yellow windows  
Cooling light  
The autumn waiting in the streetlights  
Blinking on at the first hint  
of a cold love night  
Where can the end of shells?  
Where can the moon gone to  
buttoned on the sky?  
Where won't the brown heart love?  
When in the mind  
the arid containers of ourselves,  
the words, tumbling and stumbling  
into your earth, into my sky.







WILLIAM THE CHURCHMAN

the long hands pull on dark  
by the shape of the crown  
from out of shadows her lips curving  
with the soft curve of the nose  
smiling to show of the teeth.





## WILLIAM TELL OVERTURES

Her long hands pull me down  
to the shape of her frown.  
From out of nowhere her lips curving  
with the soft curve of an arrow.  
whistling to stick up in my brain.  
The barbs of her eyes hook and tear,  
so I pull the feathers through. . .  
and find a thread. . . stitching over  
and over, looping through my fantasies,  
the barbs of her eyes, the feathers  
of her arrow's notch. String taut:  
twang, barb, notch. Thread looping round  
more and more motives for running away.  
The distance between us as great as  
a butterfly, as shallow as a bottle of wine.



## OMPHALOSKEPSIS

Life. . .

It is very full suppose

there was no 12 story building

rising out the window from clay?

The grave falling from the blade of a mattock.

(Questions darting back and forth between

our eyes, like gold blurring fish,

and striped fins wavering in and out of

proportion. . . . . When I should say your lash is

beautiful and your heel would fit in my hand.

I should tell you to meet a man, bearing my

resemblance, under the gold tree that has

captured the sun. But he might not arrive

wearing the appropriate mood,

and the leaves would turn brown around you,

and he might look later for the bones,

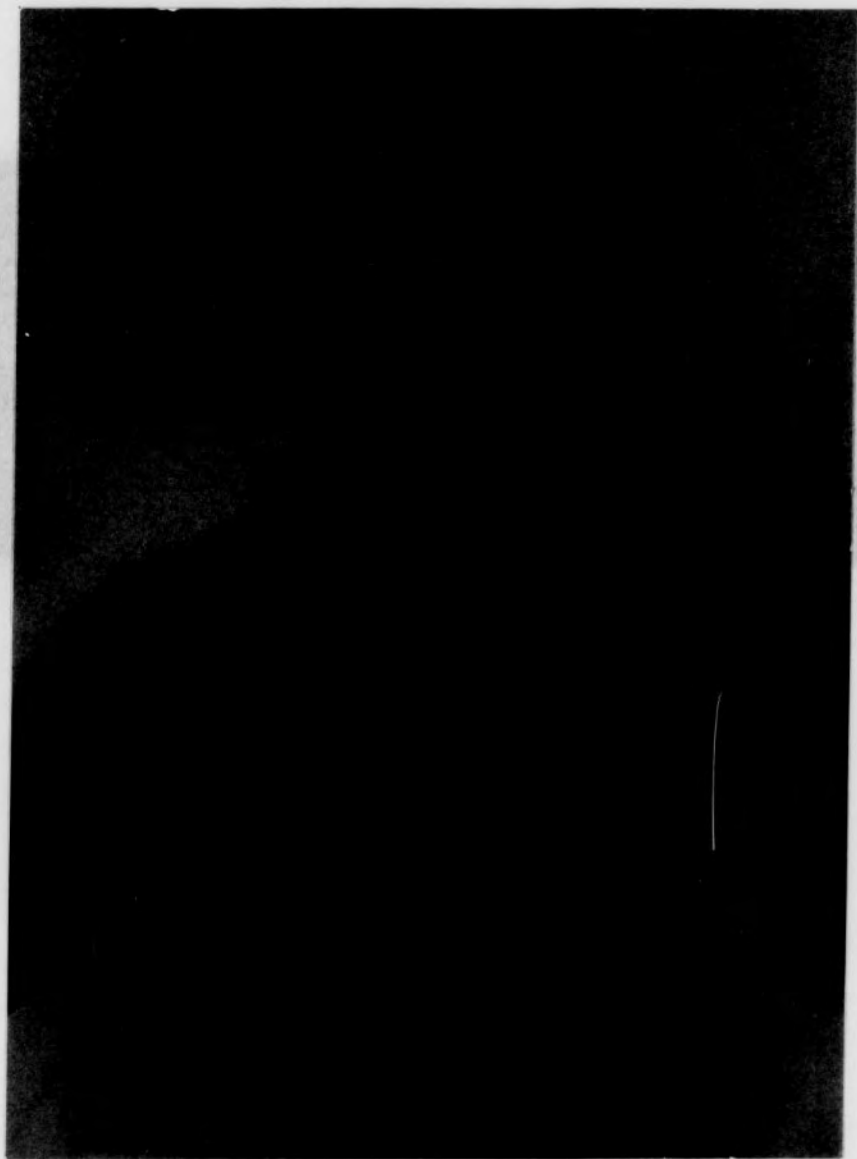
to ponder what there was, there waiting. . .)

Paint of nature under the brush of perfect weather . . .

Maple trees quiescent under their changing leaves.

The irrelevance of clay falling on the fresh face

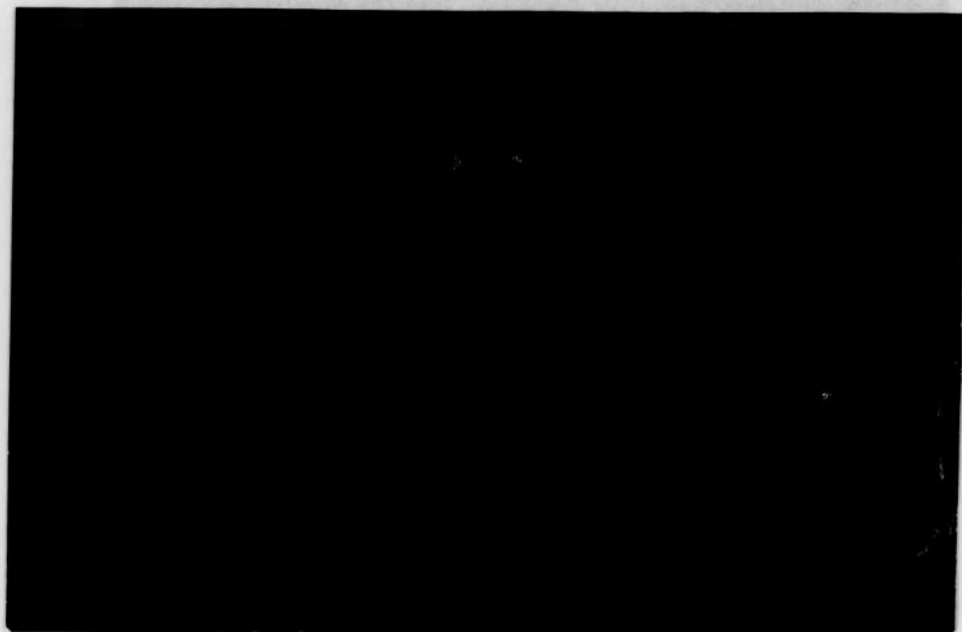
of the grave.







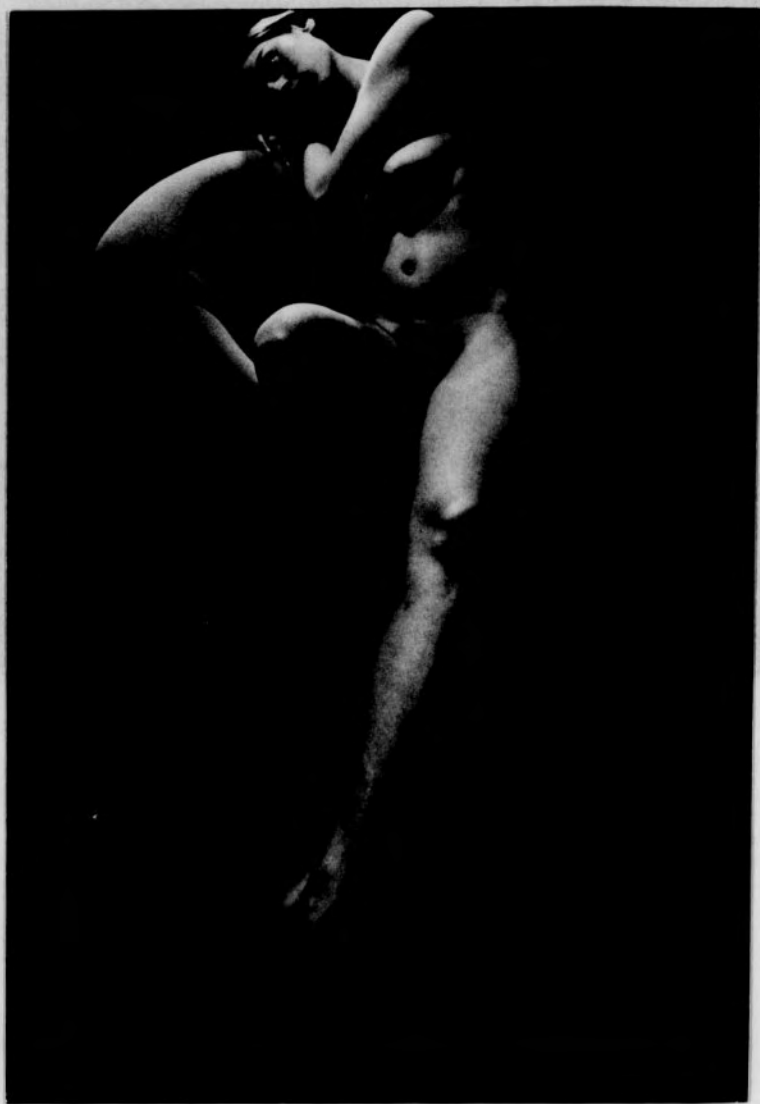








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## LOOKING FOR VENUS

Try to think of Venus  
or da Vinci with Monalisa.  
Get the stones out of your throat  
and stop your brain from  
masturbating the images.  
Look for a place between "erotic"  
and "cliche"--a place where her body  
will arrive with a living thing in its eyes.  
Manipulate her with your hands, if you must,  
but get the feel of the Milky Way and a  
patch of swelling tide. Finger her lips  
for the breath of her gods, and follow light  
into her eyes to see if it reaches the heart.  
She is no more than the shadow of a limb,  
and no less than an unnamed galaxy.  
Whether she is spring or night,  
or a hoar-frost is waiting for an eye.  
Whether you will find her soul  
in candy stores or ground into the black hole  
of the sun awaits your hand and smile.  
Pass her by with a private whistle into your collar,  
and your blood will be congealed as Prufrock in your feet.



## THE RENDEZVOUS

Snow swept the skylight.

Cold air dropped to its knees beside him.

"In just a minute. . ."

leaned against the easel

waiting for the red line of

her mouth to dry.

"We have to go now if we're going!"

". . .A few more strokes dear . . ."

A thin gray shadow ran out from

the tip of his brush

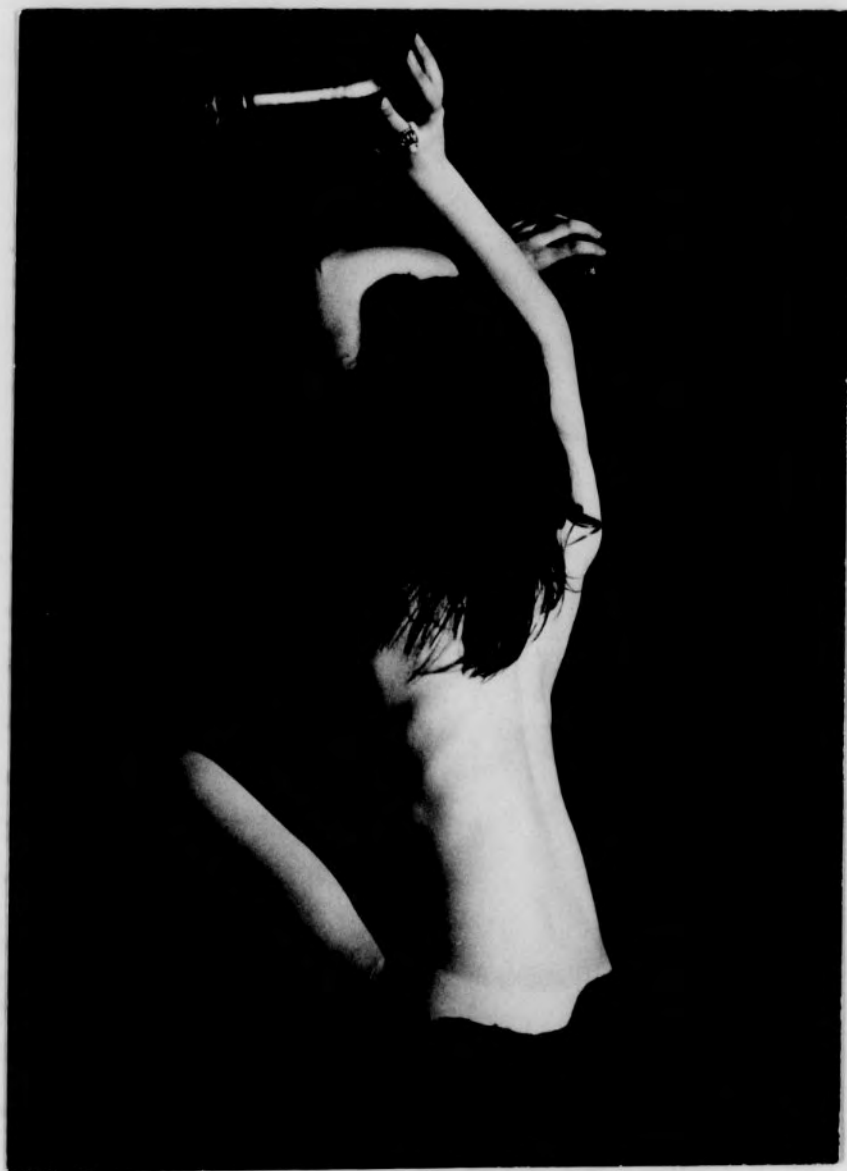
into the night air.

Spring touched the ground

for the first time and

their skin moaned in the grass.





## LITTLE POEM

Sometimes a sound enters nude  
and continues down a long section of me,  
with the fragrance of wind-chimes in a moist air,  
and the tinkling of gusts in the wind,  
and the ethereal ticking of leaves.

There is silent preoccupation with the soft noise  
of its curves purring, gently swooshing  
through me and out again.

It is a pleasant shape and scent like the  
curve of a woman's spine. A complex movement  
of nouns and verbs and images out of the way,  
a prelude to the tumbling softness of limbs.  
And there is the inexplicable existence of letters--  
a somehow skeleton for a whole  
larger than a grouping of vowels--

The "N's" reaching the corners of imaginary rooms  
with their sound--the "A" like a passionate sigh!  
A poem of harmony, a moaning happy delight:  
The weightlessness of her name  
adrift in the outerspace of imagination.





## ONE PHOTOGRAPH IS WORTH A THOUSAND "I LOVE YOU'S"

One night I photographed  
your eyes asleep    You were  
dreaming of the knight finding  
you in the meadow naked  
to your feelings    His arms  
lifted you for a single instant  
into the bliss of total existence

Your eyes are sad in this  
negative of your portrait  
of me holding the nonessential  
lens on our lives    making your  
disillusionment eternal

NO. 1000 OF JAMES



THAT

Flying over the roof

And in both cases

Learn to fly.

If there is no one

And the petals of the

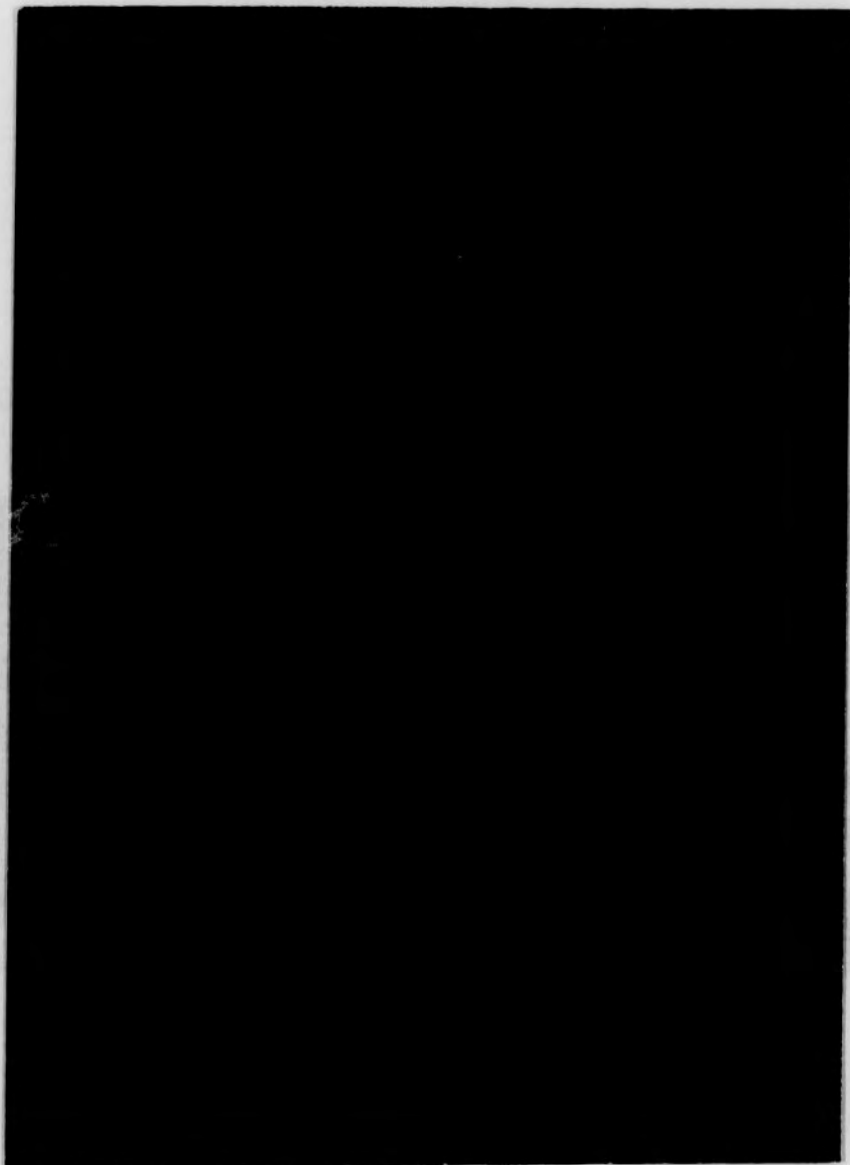
Is a flower's wing.

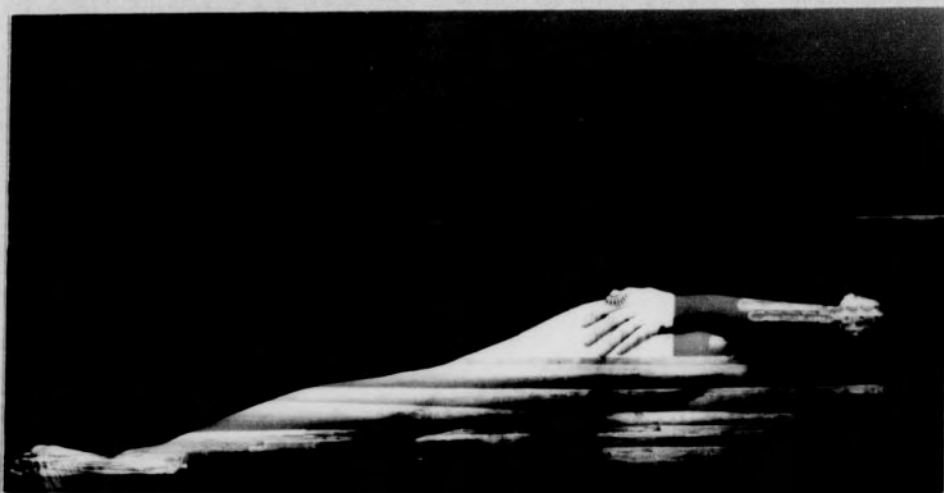
## NO KIND OF ANSWER

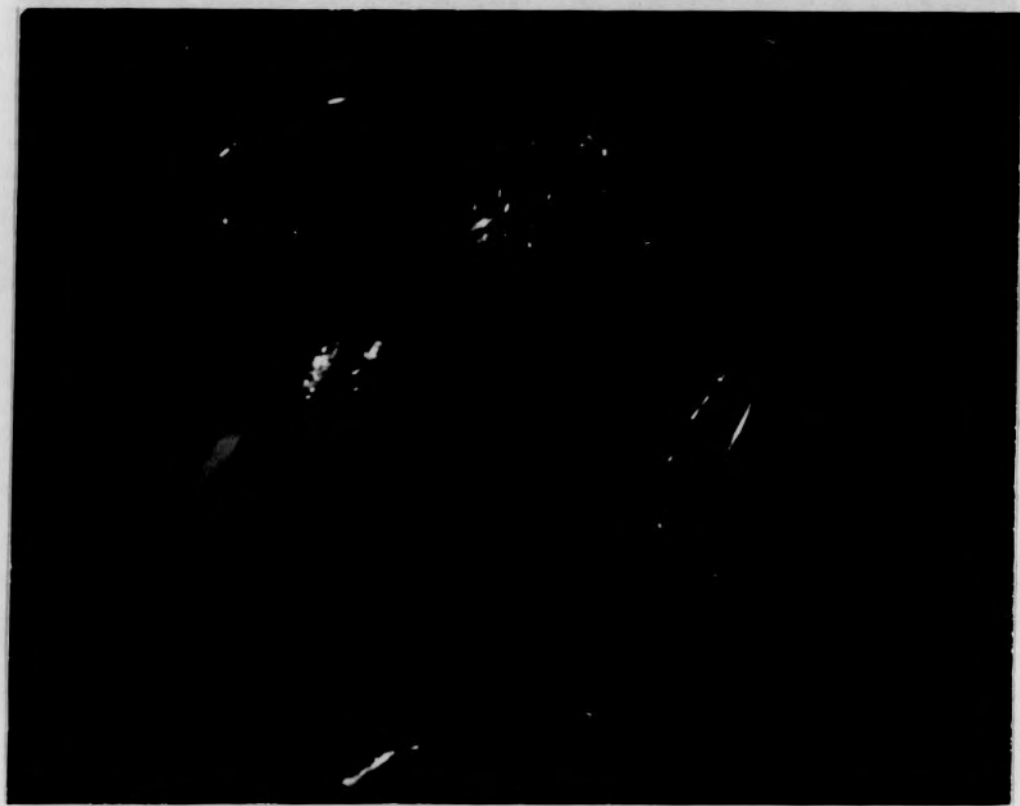
You want me for life?  
When it is difficult for me  
to love myself for hours!  
I drink scotch  
and run in place for days  
to get away,  
and sleep till eight at night  
with my tie up tight!  
So where is the assurance  
that I won't leave  
to see if I am the devil?  
Or search for a  
raven  
flying near the sun?  
Yet we both must  
learn to fly,  
if love is no more  
than the promise of air  
to a falcon's wings.

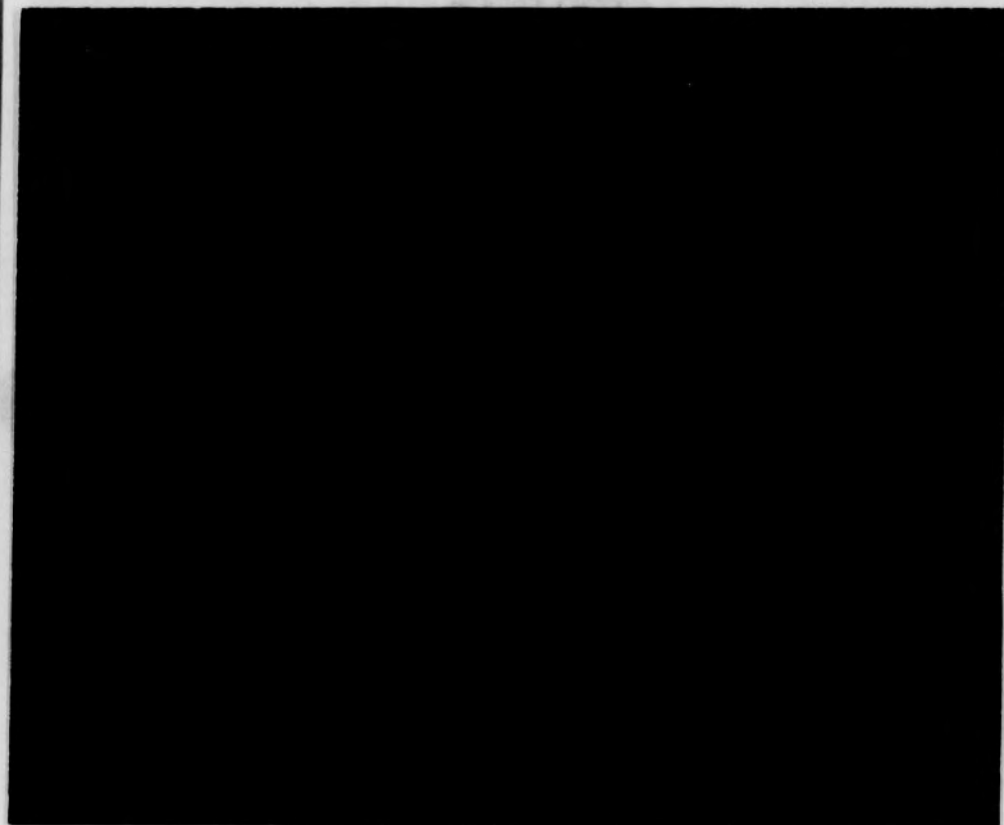






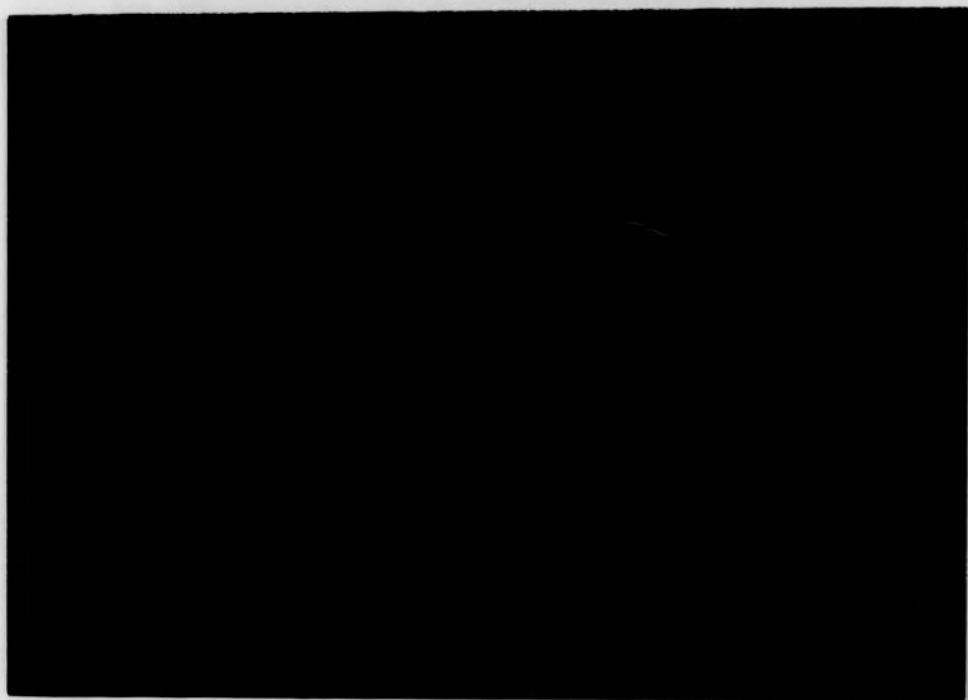












## THE GREAT JEWEL ROBBERY

It is a problem: Like speaking to another planet--  
or calling the Senator's wife without having your  
face in the appropriation for roads.

The careless lens leaving yellow leaves: Proof,  
that a tree has stood in the lawn, and branches have  
reached through the blinds, taking her down softly into  
the grass, peeling away the thin distance of reality.

How does the first hand slip beneath hair,  
and begin to speak to the skin with electric letters,  
coded words, the slow moisture of conduction --  
the fragile psychology in going ahead with the eyes,  
to say that the body is waiting,  
while wine keeps intellect busy in the edge of the ear?

How do you tell Venus you can be her arms,  
that she will be marble no more, softened with hair,  
loosening into limbs, and rolling down a long hill  
into a meadow of gold?

If I am no tourist?

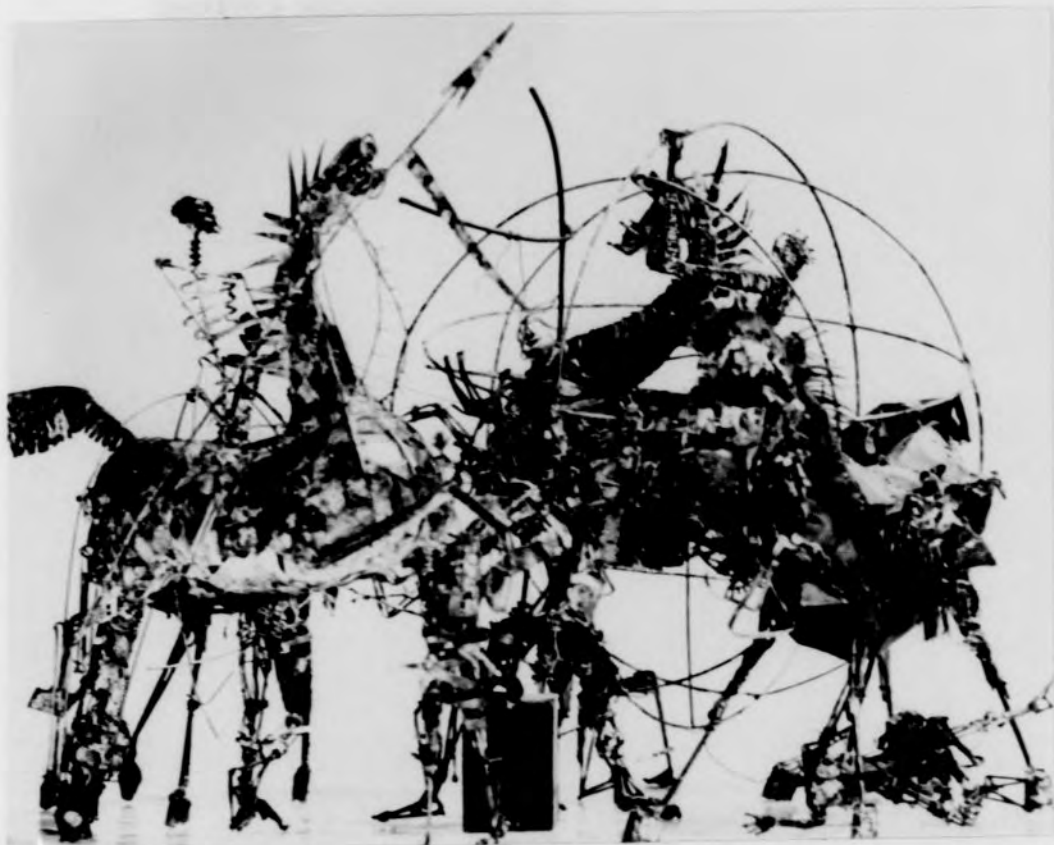
Maybe the guards will let me feel the artery *no one* sees  
(pulsing inside the sculpture of her knee!).





## THE SECOND COMING OF A SINGULAR BEAST

We are adversaries  
in some addlepatented game!  
I hear your shadows slide through my boundaries,  
hear your angry hearts pounded into the  
bonfires of night. And I cower  
and bristle at the gnashing of  
our mutual breath.  
You know me better than light  
knows the hope of another morning,  
and this wastes my strength.  
You lead me in cycles gone nowhere!  
Driving me to the stars!  
My enemy! My friend across the  
unspoken sword.  
You sneer before my artistry, surpass my weaponry,  
and mock my religion  
(which should have done away with you,  
or yours with me).  
And sometimes I have prayed  
that a singular beast comes along,  
and swallowing us,  
will finally make us whole.



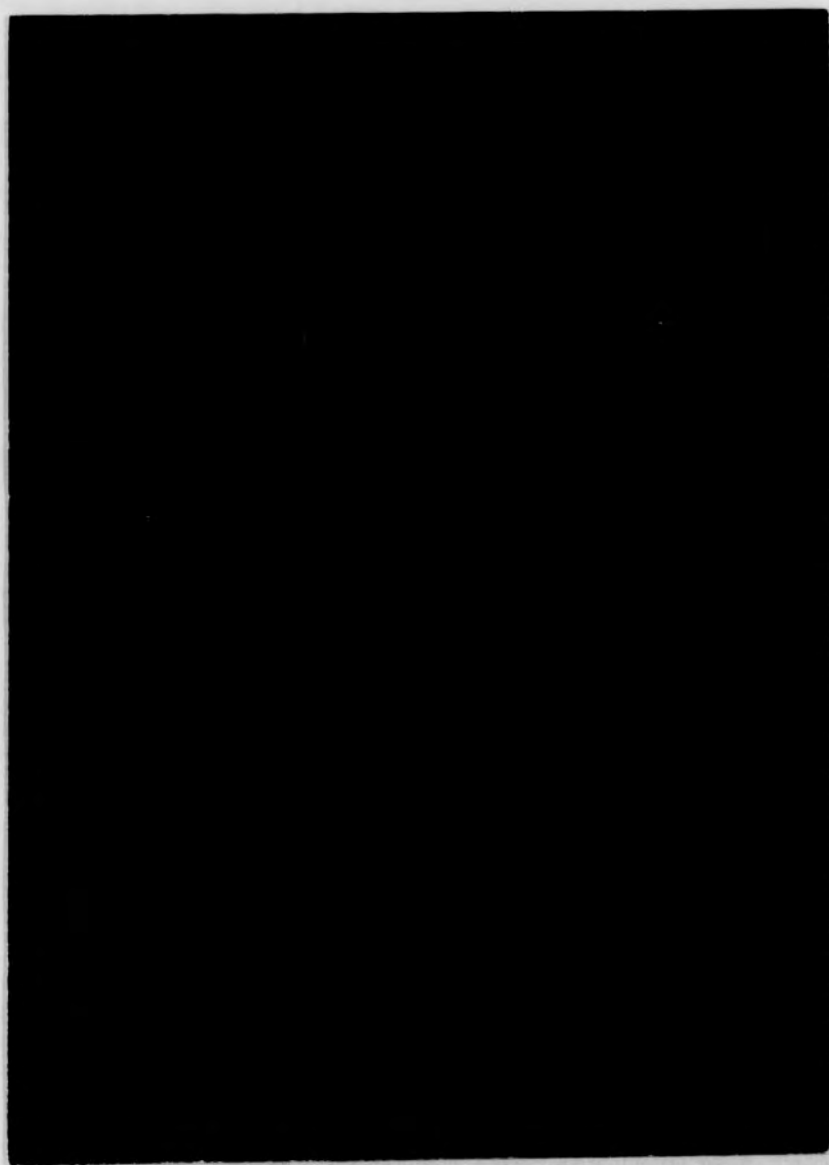
This is a sculpture by the artist  
 and it is made of metal and wood  
 and it is very beautiful and it is  
 very interesting and it is very  
 very very very very very very very

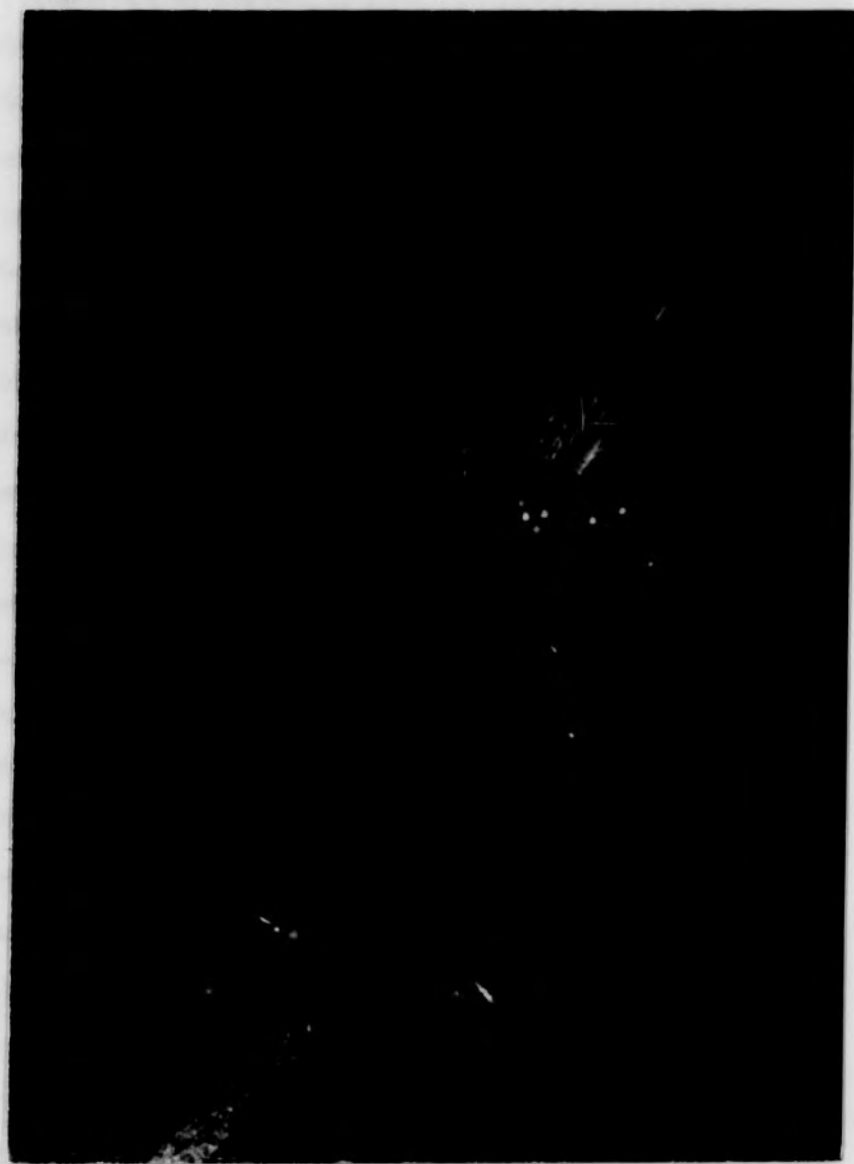
## CRACKER CRUMBS

Often afternoons yellowed  
with the drizzle of a steady  
rain of opinion or politics  
receive a short orange sunset  
suitable to the waste of words:  
when sparrows in the driveway  
said more relevant things about  
life like, "Here's a bug" and  
"There's a cracker crumb."

The daily poem comes again  
in the afternoon of libel and war and  
greed. The funnies are black as  
the thoughts of soldiers who died with  
the truth falling all around them.  
Something relevant from the throat of  
a sparrow like, "This eyeball is made  
of glass" or "this leg of wood."

Pour another sunset from your flask!  
Roll that keg of cold friends  
up on your elbow and drink deeply to their souls.  
Let us hope we'll still love a little  
when the light and breath are gone!





## THE ILLUSION OF WHOLENESS

For one moment there was the  
illusion of wholeness:

Brittle skating edges of two worlds  
becoming one, the perimeter of arms  
and hands conjoining the green cellular  
lattice of all foliage. Digits twining limbs.  
Loins swallowed in the frothing bark of  
the sea. Forehead and stars--dreams and  
the sway of lace in a meadow.

For a time, between the slant of light  
and the brain, there was a bonding ray  
in the blood of the oak and the vine of the  
woman's mind. Fireflies were bred in the flashing  
of her eyes. Doors opening and closing,  
entering her body, and leaving, with the lush  
sound of a new forest after a lightning fire.

The tumble of the river  
over its swollen banks, the metabolic rising  
and setting of the sun and her breathing.  
The moods of weather became the moisture in  
her eyes. She lay with the crickets and  
longed for the buzz of life in the grass--



In a second she was the architect and soil of nature--  
But from her dream she woke in her garden  
to the sparkling twitch of a spider  
tossing a web around her mate,  
washing down the last legs of her children  
with a draught of bumble-bee blood.  
After dark she watches by flashlight from her dining room:  
Roaches skate the boundaries of her kitchen floor.



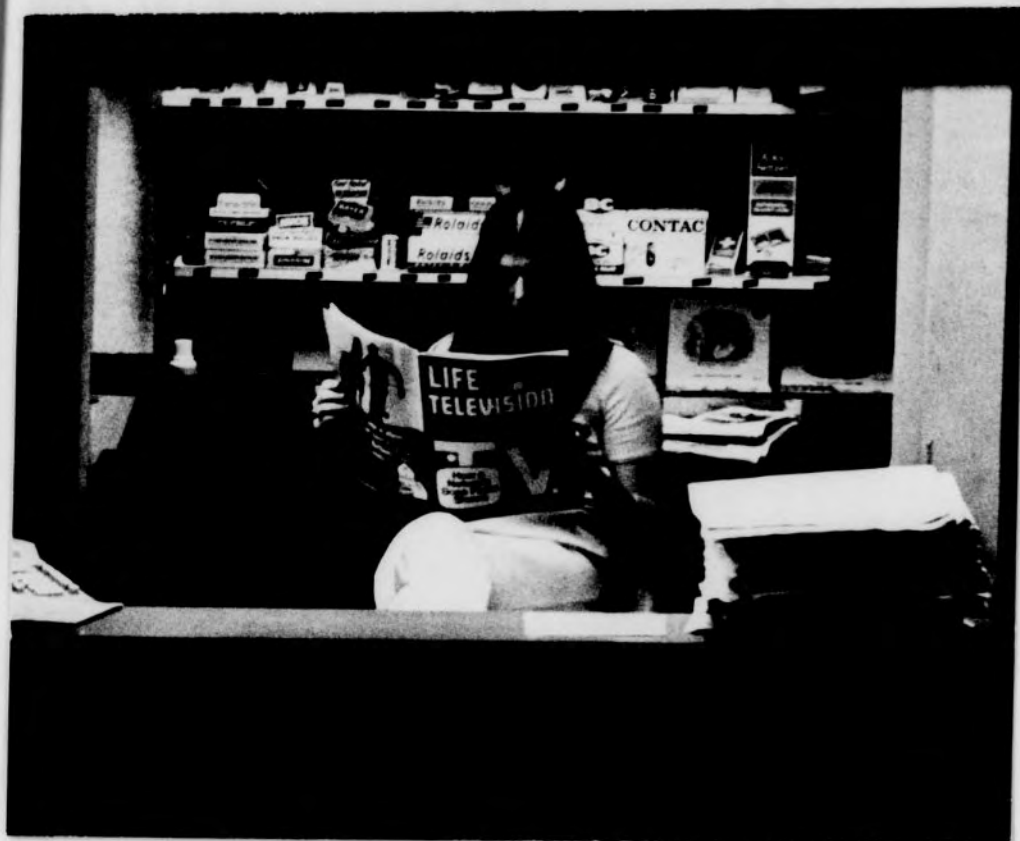


## FATHER NEPTUNE

His little church was a hilltop  
shack Not closer to anything  
than Neptune's dry rings Dust  
floating His puffed little face  
Outward Green-eyed Cat-staring  
from his single room A fish  
turned cerebral and erect on the dry hill

He rode love every night  
when it kneeled beside the ornament-  
Earth He galloped the stars  
Competing with Polemists Economists  
raising cash for the dark Magicians  
wept at his magic rides from black  
shrouds and love came in last Behind  
Caesar Stalin indelible on the pond

Inside the green tombs of lost saints  
the simple truth was living alone  
And Father Neptune carried cheese and  
wheat bread into forgotten caves



## COMING TOGETHER

Down the Great Wall of China  
 through poppy fields of peasants in the sun  
 The World War put gently aside by the gym door

To mate a paramecium to a protozoa?  
 Because they love water?  
 Because they mark time between the  
 division of cells?  
 Flu in their orbital electrons?

Something in common like lungs  
 or the lumps in a fist fight  
 Chopin Or cheap wine under a sand-dune sky:

The West and the East  
 come to the tables with paddles  
 And the quick flights of a ping-pong ball!

## THE LONE STAR BAR AND GRILL

There was an inexorable tone in the  
voices that night, and the room swam  
around like a tank full of fish.  
And riding the noise of a jet into flight  
an impetus emerged like the proverbial  
Doctor in the House. It was clear  
there would be an end to the war  
some glorious day apple-picked from  
the future, ushered into the gaze  
of astounded sheep like the surprising  
visit of H. Rap Brown to the Fiftieth  
Centennial of the Ku Klux Klan.  
Peace! Because there would be no armies.  
An ingenious plan formed in the last  
lucid moments of many Lone Star beers.  
And the celebration began to wind in  
the streets, infusing the hot wind of  
a Texas night with all the reconstructed  
energy of Hiroshima. The mutant children  
of Nagasaki trembled miles away as if  
the nightmares they witnessed from the  
womb contained reality, and the clamorous  
subways of New York and Moscow sped beneath  
the murky Hudson (The Kremlin murmured that  
it just might work!).

A joke, a passionate joke at first  
(For Death Row dares scarcely whisper the name  
of the Governor). A joke which demanded its  
one serious word--and it spread to the cover  
of Time, and radiated hope from Izvestia.  
The little red hardbacks of the Chinese Guard  
added a prayer for the Peace. The French were  
enamoured and railed like heralds of a new Gospel  
from the left bank. But still there was War  
in the dismal jungle whore-house where the blind  
scab democracy grew rich under a Tea House moon.  
But such an ingenious plan so simply would end it  
all now. When no one would mention uranium or the  
potentialities of a giant Asian seaport, a million  
tons of heroin when Johnny comes marching home.  
Now the world was ready for a lasting peace,  
and the youth were in charge of the day! Hitler  
was a lunatic who burned in the War of The Worlds,  
thirty-five pages of a history book, and Auschwitz  
was a low Gothic horror, washed finally away by the rain.  
The youth of the world all gathered in one afternoon,  
in one spot and all the continent of Asia--  
a grand pacification army to act out the plan.  
The most arrogant iconoclasts squirmed in their graves,  
and we heard as the date of All Peace was established,



by the voice of a thousand cultures, and the names,  
like the skins, like the climates we came from was poured  
in the mold of our own. We banded together like a world  
of disciples, the sons of a hundred gods' love: And we  
marched from the bloodshed one day! We stepped from the  
tanks, and abandoned the battlefields, ejaculated into the  
instant of flight, and floated down softly in Peace.

And the world was an eerie quiet, and the sound of the rice  
was heard growing, and tarantulas strolled on the quiet fur  
of their feet, no Arabs and Jews lined the sea.

The discarded guns quickly rusted, and vines coiled the  
phalanx of cannons and spiders crawled to new homes.

We had all gone home, and the monsoons were over and left  
to the farms. There could be no perpetuation now!

So we gathered again victorious,

at the Lone Star Bar and Grill, in the first warm dusk  
of a Texas night in July. And a spokesman emerged

like the proverbial Doctor in the House, and it was obvious  
by what he had said that there would be more:

And more Lone Star beer was consumed!

And much more beer was consumed!





## THE CITY

I sit above the city, and the time-exposure  
begins to print itself before my paralyzed  
eyes, with the streaming lines of headlights,  
incoherently zeroed on some destiny  
under the permissiveness of night, under  
the divergent headlights of place and time.  
The war of intellects goes on in coffee nooks,  
their ideas for survival drifting ineffectually  
and down, like the residue of streets into  
gutters after a rain has ended. And the real  
enemy wastes away in the most innocent of  
domiciles, in the scraped together adobes  
of the poor, where each requisite nine  
months passes like the rabbit through  
the boa, regurgitating its increment of life  
into the open arms of a seething contrivance,  
another body constricting free movement  
in another space, another smell to  
complicate the air, another warrior  
to be convinced of the incomprehensibility of  
War; Like the locus of points to Extinction . . .

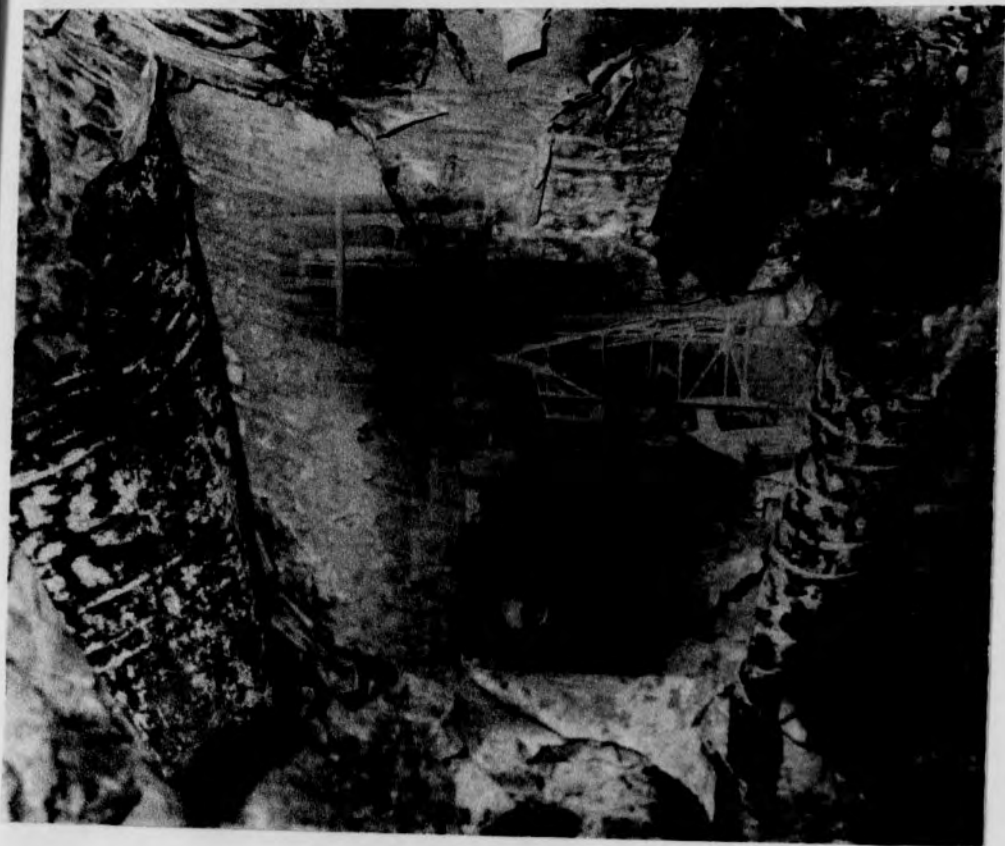
## HANDS AND MOUTHS

Many voices trickled through  
the wormy gathering, squirming  
feverishly with point and counter-  
point, like the massing of positive  
and negative ions in a thunderhead.  
Voweling into the scar tissue  
of the unhearing, waiting to be  
heard. Involvement like a  
war, with words, pouring  
angry eyes down peep sights,  
with the perpetual report-less clickings  
of firing pins freed into  
the dark air of their chambers.  
Many voices rapping at worms,  
an ooze of sound without meaning  
or form, a potpourri of  
misconception and wisdom  
shouted down in a fury.  
Wisdom unseen, unexpressed —  
wisdom buried in the intercourse  
of babbling equals.



## TIMELY IMAGES

There were no songs sung  
at the sunshine's last picnic.  
Towns torn down.  
Chickens flaming through  
the streets after death.  
Cancer spreading under stones.  
Saturday parades into the hills  
to touch the moss growing on  
grave rocks, to dig beneath the  
half-life of topsoil accumulated.  
Watching the sunset fry the eyes  
of lizards fused to fence posts.  
There were no songs.  
Birds guarded their limbs from  
the hunter's last glance. And the air ached  
with the movement of great numbers  
drawing it near, great numbers drawing  
nigh, great volumes of air through  
cadavers' lungs.



## ONE MORE LAP

Form up! We're riding out  
into the sun and gold,  
and dipsticks stand at the ready!  
Asphalted prairies  
convolute against the sky-cusp  
like the brains of herefords  
spread out in the last sun  
for the vision of gnats.  
Cactus cushions muzzle foaming orange  
streams, their root-sand slipping  
in an avalanche over fish-eggs drying.  
And the last miner from the  
Comstock struggles to the mouth  
and drops like the Mother Lode  
in a lump by the rigid skeleton of his  
burro. A ghost world toils  
in the face of tumbleweeds, bent  
like motorcycles on drugs to the  
ground for L. A., with an ego  
for the city and the heart for a thousand  
year space-odyssey to Neptune--  
or farmers are planting corn  
and marijuana by the canals  
of Mars to reduce the waste of



dead land.

Gentlemen, start your engines.

One more trip around the globe, and let's  
close this mess down for the season!

JOHN'S THESIS PAPER  
100% RAG EXTRA NO. 1 QUALITY





"SINGLE VISION"

There is no other world in the calipers  
revealing itself as an inch,  
and giger counters are wasted to probe the sky  
searching for the odor of another king,  
the microscope has again found virus and body spice  
on slides from Cathedrals,  
and there seems no other where to turn for reality.  
The illusive whyness and whatness has easily slipped away--  
in the glare of the spherical greenhouse.  
The empirical sphere--opaque after Einstein--  
Increasing its negligible shape into the unknown.  
The empirical motion outward  
like lemmings loosed on an endless desert,  
toward a trillion species from now.  
Drying skin under an aging yellow sun, piercing the womb  
with bits and flashes, demons and gods,  
noise and chaff.

## QUASAR WATCH

Stone in the stare of the Milky Way  
black cosmic gasp of space,  
revolving per Newton and Ptolemy  
an Earth-eye staring in space.

Modules blown free of Earth's gravity,  
transistor minds chewing up bits.  
The retro aimed blasting up cosmic debris  
a rope hammock swings down and then quits.

The Texas sun stops in a burnt-grass back yard  
the TV screens fill with the moon.  
And Mankind claims triumph before the stars  
Sweat war and shiver: Monsoon!

A rocket hurls brain to the lap of the gods,  
unaware in the back yard of Mars  
of the ancient white light-cells outliving their stars,  
through five billion years from Quasars,  
3,000,000,000,000,000,000,000,000 miles,  
a million-trillion centuries beyond the Man-moon.

## BASIC TRAINEE MOON

The pisces pilots, sardines and TV,  
 the Third Law broken loose and running free--  
 Landing a fish on the back side of the moon,  
 while we squish the air from an Air Force issue room.  
 White damn moon! Chucka boots! (The new men swoon)  
 Holy Ghost scream giggle grin.  
 Faces stacked up on the chin of a window-sill  
 sweat dripping damned moon! Boots dust crust  
 Face Chill Old bright shining cheese,  
 when I used to squat on the top of a field on my knees--  
 Way way beyond the last stage of my mind,  
 no way to stop gaining on time since Einstein.  
 Sticky boots in the dry chest of our age.  
 Damned Air Force issue moon!  
 The sweating room in a daze.

## PERSONALITY AND TECHNIQUE

$E=nh\nu$

A philosophy?

Not math Nor equations dropping from a tree

(Isaac Newton's serendipity)

But the blood and protein of quantum time,  
and the old grip on atoms passing to Einstein.

The shape of light become particulate,  
and energy made from mass.

$E=mc^2$  evolved too late

to vaporize the mind of Auschwitz

To crystalize the gas.

With pale perspective burned from the brain,  
fingering truth past instruments' range:

The best still "lack all conviction,"

the worst ink new worlds without a past.

Dull millions drone with their affliction,

dormant senses encased in useless tasks--

Not knowing there is a narrow realm near light  
just wide enough for mass to blossom like a god,  
where boulders whirl with bewildering might,  
as their feet sink deeper into the sod.

$E=nh\nu$  is Max Planck's equation describing the energy of atomic oscillators.  $n$ =an integral number;  $h$ =Planck's constant ( $6.63 \times 10^{-34}$  joule-sec);  $\nu$ =frequency of oscillator. It shows that energy is released in "jumps," not continuously.

## FIFTH SENSE PRIME

 $\psi^2 dV$ 

A probability?

Integration of god-shells over Unity:

From suns and quasi-stars

to June bugs captured on a string

Spiral galaxies    Canals on Mars

And Lazarus appearing once again.

Found in the space of the atom's rage

or shaved from the skin of the sun.

New gods predicted for psychology

to strip naked one by one.

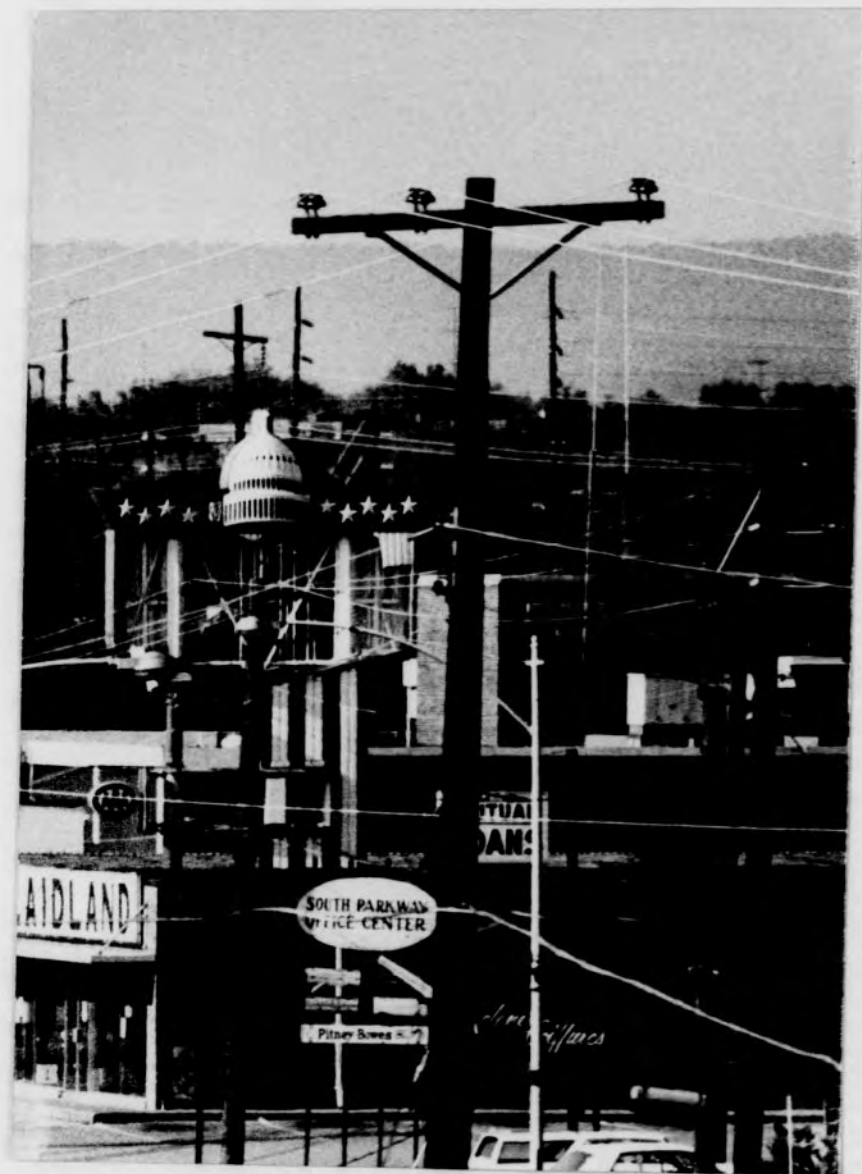
The chance to find a foot-print

left cold by the age of a stride.

While Max Born pursues the new scent

faith, Pope, and absolutes hide.

$\psi^2 dV$  describes the probability that a particle of matter exists in a given instant in a particular place.



## SINCE THE URN

There's not time  
on the second-hand of the sundial  
for love and beauty combined.  
Not time, no wages for truth.  
No soft glance from Wall Street  
for the poetry the sidewalks write,  
for one fish come from the ancient sea  
crawling along a pterodactyl's wings!  
Now I would be free  
if I were right for this cooling planet.  
For the Earth is a mineral again  
burdened with dying men.  
And there is no air in the green house  
that flowers will eat, or defend  
with their symmetry and oxygen.  
The energy of the urn has gone into steel  
and glass cities shadowing the moon,  
wasting as a shadow over brown streets,  
the disciples long since murdered in their rooms.  
The faces stare into the smoky sun  
into symptoms of an oily disease--  
and they fail to see in the embers of their retinas,  
the gift of light has been set free.



PRAYER TO A MYTHICAL GOD FROM A TINY  
QUADRANT OF A DUSTY UNIVERSE

It's a deadend,  
a train track ended in tumbleweed,  
a ghosttown backed up to the mountains.  
There's no use pawing the dust  
till the heart stops, a bull head  
bent to batter a star into submission.  
Because? Because  
there always will be  
God forsaken, endless,  
trivial miles  
between the hand and the nearest  
star!  
A day is not  
a sun furled voyage  
to the blinding isles of wisdom.  
Who can bear the  
degradation, the awful boredom  
of the dustless miles,  
the miles of dust?  
Oh God  
pave the way!



Not the way a martyr  
walked a hundred hills  
of dust from Palestine!  
And don't tell me I must  
guard my briar patch  
of impatience  
so I may doubt this existence  
on a final cross--  
For the time for nails  
has long since come and gone,  
and the wrists  
are swelled with waiting!



## ANOTHER RACE

Mornings press on me  
with their demands  
as minutes march on  
eight o'clock ragged  
as Germans on Leningrad.

Swallowed in its mood  
my face is long and serious.  
Yet she bubbles inexplicably  
as if her more sensible  
relatives are birds that  
rise at dawn to sing of  
earthworms, and figs ready  
in the trees.

But here my race peers  
through the early morning  
mist, our lights stopped  
in a white glare.

## DESIGNING SALARY

They are all around me at G21  
 and grave as the basements of London in a blitz!  
 Driven from mediocrity to minuscule task.  
 Potatoes sprouting eyes below the sink.

A comma tripping over half the morning.  
 The mumble and rumble of a hundred frowns!  
 Intimations and promulgations:  
 Selecting specs for the elbows of wasps.  
 The angle of attack of a gnats ass.

Perpetuated by organs of myth and  
 corpuscular killings. Maintaining a space  
 with the stooped shoulders of pears.

Daily pontificators of pale religions.  
 Sucking dry the breasts of Security!  
 Nursemaids for my mornings, priests for my  
 afternoons.

T.S.

Broken slouch down

on the dry back of an oaken chair.

Reality from money gone.

The hypnotist turned back into currency  
one noonday sun.

Never before so wild-eyed and cold inside,  
where the Wasteland festered and grew —  
the bear on its two hind feet  
beating his mind into Prufrocks  
and windowless rooms,  
brown-smoke cats and fog,  
and the deserted soul drying-out in the cruel sun.

Loosening from the dry socket  
of a bad job and a cold grave,  
a soulless job, minted of gold.  
Caught in the greedy stares,  
turning pounds into lira,  
dollars into Englishmen.

The world had become patriots  
and tank-tracks clanking among the dead,  
Ptolemy gone bad over England —  
Newton in the North Sea  
clinging to the Third Law.

A broken young poet rose in the Interregnum  
between Freud and Einstein Darwin  
and Madame Curie. The psychic need arisen  
to retch truth from the teeth of a fleeing faith,  
Madonna and Child, "Hail Mary full of Grace!"

The pain of a shattered Millineum  
dissolving in incense and myrrh.  
The wrinkled soul rounding up Christ  
for another go at the cross.

Grown dry dealing money in temples of wealth,  
grown cold as a desert-bone night--  
made up new out of ashes  
and the kick of poems inside--  
barely saved from a Wall Street kind of death  
by the ring of the Wasteland in his mind!





## POINT OF VIEW

"I'm not cold! My roof is not broken  
by rain. But my jugular swells against my  
tie every day. And I seem to be dying of tautness!

I am jettied up and down, popping my ears, filling  
with the effervescence of arguments, and the  
mediocre fizzle of time--Yet you calmly study poverty,  
and the smell of flowers come through a creaking winter!

Climbing down the old weathered stairs into a poem  
I feel the same as you. And we both find our  
different ways of dying. Trapped in the hot weather,  
I know I want out! But then I fear the reticent space  
between my pen and the page, and outward, belly in hands,  
hoping for some sunlight to fall and feed the soul  
and fill the collapsing skin.

Study what you love, you can tell me!  
I think I know! Or study where the man is--  
and is dying! Before you stands the stuff of an  
old man: With his life stretching out behind him  
important as commas in a sentence. A man preoccupied  
with paragraphing in a letter to his God. Impotent  
as a sparrow fighting a fire with its flaming wings!



God! Such a life can only end in a round silence  
of pears--an impotence trailing bread crumbs into  
thin graves. I see a pale gray man trapped ineptly  
in the hot weather between sweaty hands. And you can  
understand? So few will have time to see flowers push  
up through their winters. And they will identify with me!"

THE MOUNTAIN

THE MOUNTAIN

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THE MOUNTAIN



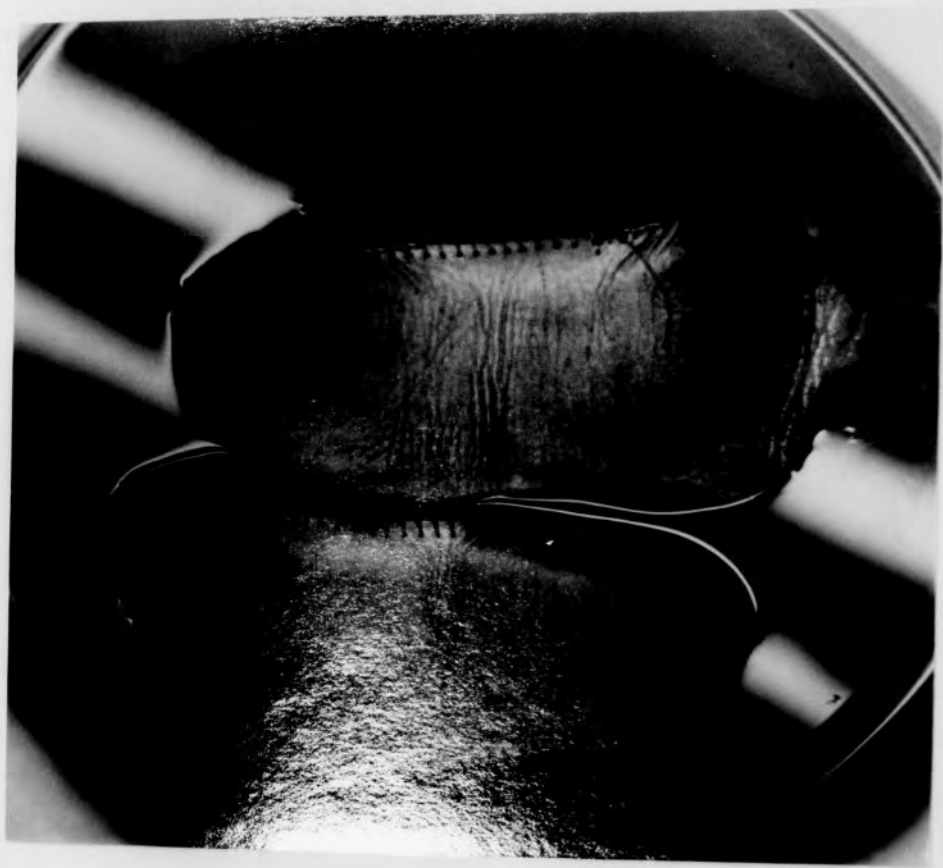
THE MOUNTAIN

## A MATTER OF VOLITION

Life could have been  
a continuum of augers  
and air hammers and  
my mind a clinker,  
and still there is  
scant society in this  
villa on the outskirts--  
an errant raindrop from  
the public fountain  
blown by a confusion of wind.

Now what do I do here  
sweating in the evaporative  
sun? The soil is tugging  
me down for conscription  
into brussel sprouts and  
the moldy work of a tap root  
under a diseased tree.  
For there is no pleasure  
in the foul tongues  
of factories and loggerjams of  
metal spewing poisons on the  
innocent eggs of the future.

So having  
placed myself on the plants that  
drip from the exhaustion of  
going to the soil  
I sustain a cycle in the sun.  
The sound, the feel of this place  
is my own volition—arranged for me  
by millions. Hands out of tombs  
holding me to the corner of their purpose.  
A thousand committees meeting me  
under the moon  
to bring my scattered motives  
more nearly to their spirits:  
Those light spirits in the  
psychic ocean  
that have told us,  
"Slowly mankind, slowly!"



## DYING UPSIDE DOWN AND WRONG-SIDE OUTWARD

Pseudonym dropped in a bucket

of spit,

Paper-plane poem crashed in the

puddle of a roof below.

No longer the trainee for

a job--

Face full of grimsies

contortions of caring

whether "A" becomes "B-

slash-underline-colon."

Colon knotted in the sink-trap

full of sluice and grey drool,

mouth tilted cockeyed.

Willing to learn another myth

for another stroke across the

bottom of the world.

Aimed down a fake-splattered way

with an arm-load

of toy responses

and appropriate grunts and

tight-chested gestures.

Tintern Abbey smeared on the

toilet walls,

Walden Pond in the bowl.

The language neatly powdered  
in green mold.

Ha-ha falling like bullets  
thumping to a white end  
in flour.

Stars eclipsed in black velvet  
folded away in a costume jewelry box.

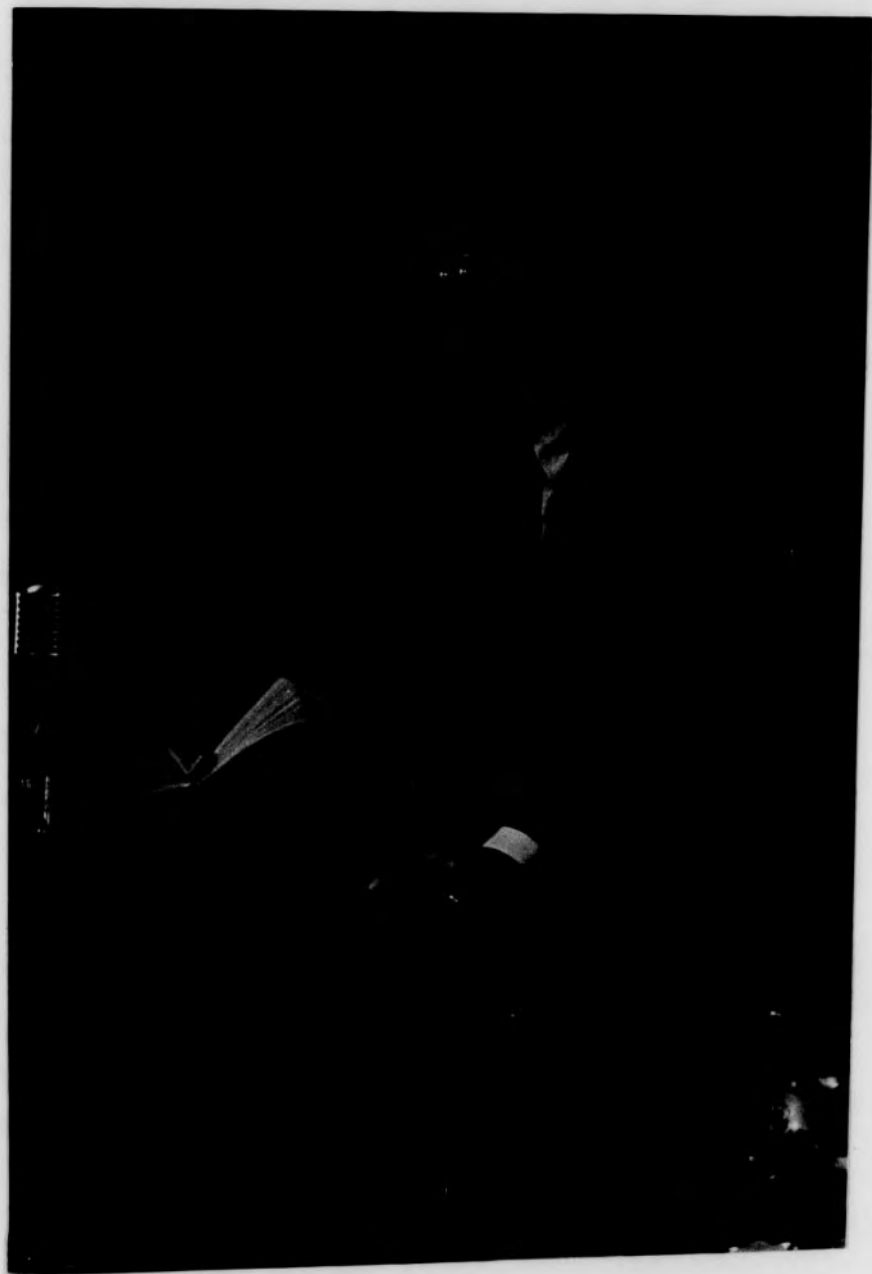
Reality impossible to identify  
in a feather-cage  
of fast-footed corridor people.

"Oh no, Doctor Ben! Not with the  
audible warning of a rubber glove!

"Your heart flops first into your hands  
and then your lungs--

Finally your eyes search the darkness  
for hair.

"A red blood-smoke becomes the throat  
and there is an inversion of the skin  
and finally you belong to them!"







## RECENT CHOICES

Poets are often like people.

They seem to represent freedom

(leaping into the Caribbean as the  
bad final blow-job of a whale) . . .

(walking with a long cancerous face  
in London, life dissolved in  
the exchange of a peso for a pound . . .)

(Babbling Fascist absolutes to Mussolini  
from the vantage of his disconnected mind  
and the soft darkness of his padded cell . . .).

Something went wrong between the advent of  
the poem and the burial of the poet:  
But the flowers in the first line only  
implied the activity and scent of another spring.

Past metre and rhyme, nearer the smell of spilt  
coffee and the oil of typewriter,

there is a lewd and happy man in America, falling like an adagio  
in front of the conductor of an east-bound train:

With all the freedom expected of anyone  
choosing his life from a brown-paper-bag full of  
often repeated rabbits and silk scarves!







## THE OLD FIRST SERGEANT

He talked of the service, his voice  
rising and falling to hold our attention.  
My mind wandered from the black bear in Alaska  
to antique automobiles and relics  
out of their time and usefulness.  
To the Calhoun slaves spinning yarn  
on the hillside in the cookhouse.  
And he spoke of death and I listened:  
1498 men died around Berlin in wreckage  
of their Mitchel Bombers. But he and one  
returned to wonder why. And he thinks  
of the glory in a corpse sometimes,  
when he sits alone in the Maintenance Shop  
with only the hot wind of the fan  
and the generations of flies that  
come with the long heat of summer.  
He related the curious tale  
of the bear which could not comprehend  
the Air Force in its woods. Hungry and bewildered,  
its urine in the pies,  
it snapped the steam pipes, and died  
in the blood of a steaming kitchen  
floor. It died with the sound of

the old sargeant's voice.

As I watched him babbling soundlessly,  
I visualized a soldier without a war,  
a fireman in a small town in Tennessee,  
thin and listless, leaning back on his sweat-  
stained swivel chair, oblivious to crickets.







## A CASE STUDY

He changes clothes in a dream,  
as we watch sidling behind his mind,  
always turning with the camera.  
He is suddenly frightened by what he  
is become. He has murdered the faceless  
shape of a friend. (A freight that had waited  
in a gene smashes the lattice work of sanity  
between his eyes, and he reels with a motionless  
roll, and his palms glow with the pressure  
of blood in his life-line). And there was  
none of this before the recurrent dream.  
Only the rib-eye lunch and coffee,  
the shadows marking cracks in the sidewalk.  
Another injection induces deeper sleep,  
he returns, naked, running through gulleys,  
staying in water, and leaping barefoot  
on stones and fallen oaks. He is confused  
and sick, and there is sour fruit waiting  
in his throat, and there is an outlaw sagging  
in a mirror on his private wall.  
When he awakens he asks us if we know. We do,  
and we lie. His breathing is too fast,  
and he goes away to be by himself,  
in a place not yet selected.

We all agreed as he left  
that his features were set,  
that he seemed determined.

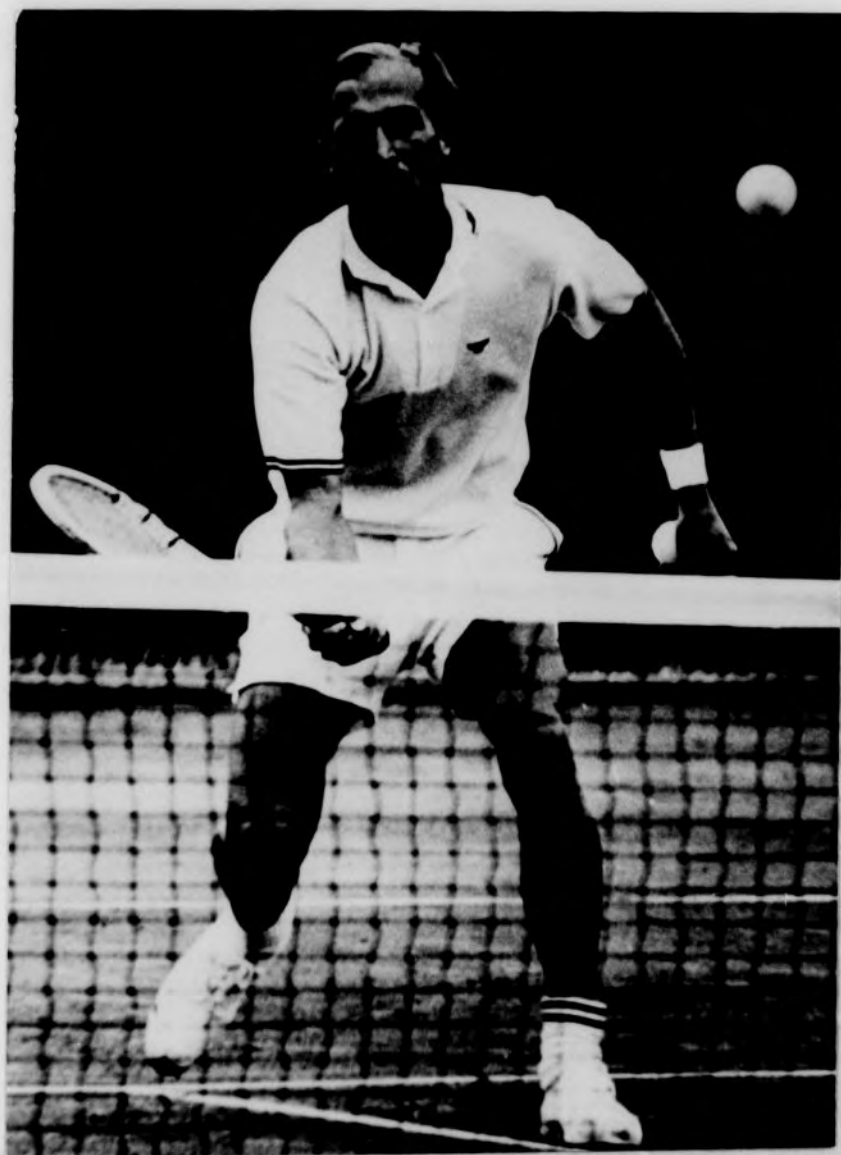


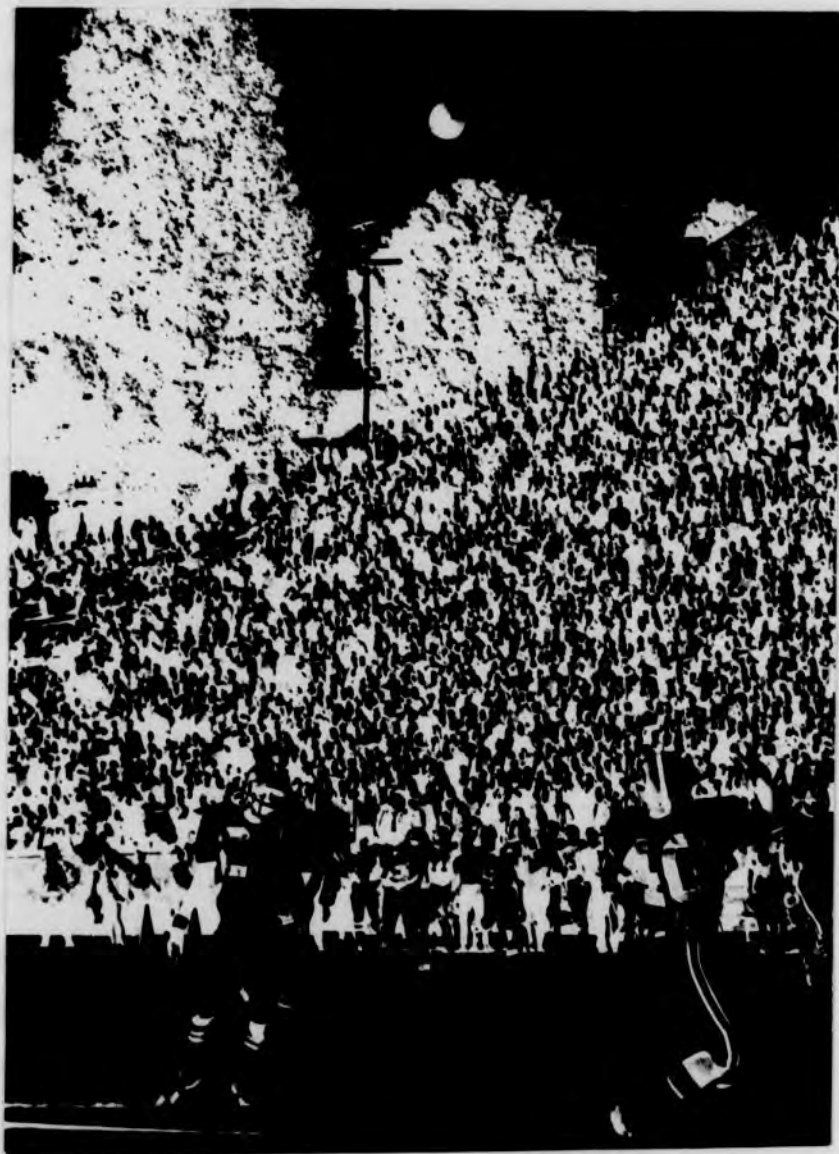
NO EXTRA, NO QUALITY

## ROAR OF SUNLIGHT AND STONE

In the roar of sunlight and stone  
there is a woman nine-years-old  
stopped to see the sky buzz with  
a message of sun. She is folded into  
the boulders and froth as slickly as a fish--  
as perfectly as a secret summer nourishing  
a single flower--She is stoned by the  
hypnotic absence of time while life greets her  
warm in the face. She has stopped to study  
for an infinite strobe of her mind  
the energy born with light  
and the ancient cold that is rising around  
her ankles in the mountain of her youth.









## LONG PASS IN THE ASTRODOME

(OR BEHIND THE YMCA)

Sinew bone and air    Projected  
on an eye    Dome-capped roar  
Spinning leather    Cajoled by  
fingertips    Silent    Alone  
Carrying commandments    Velocities  
in intercourse    Tall air for an instant  
real    Important    Cared for like a new  
business    Monoliths impaled    Impaling  
violence in a cocoon of silk restrictions  
Parabolic arc promised to a cubic foot  
or air    Ordained in an increment of time  
Predicted    Brave like a baby drinking  
from its first cup of milk    Snatched  
on appearing    Born    Eluding the  
failure of the finite    Stopped in a cheer  
Chill    The alphabet done properly  
Courage on the scale that a cat presumes  
when it bats down a bumblebee  
The mind and the hand    The social  
rhythm of the heart come together  
to underline a moment    Like the hour  
in the autumn sun of years ago  
Alone in the colored leaves





## THE BLACK LIE

Black man!

Why you? Why did you  
ask things of me I would not  
do for myself even on those  
dark evil nights

when I track barefooted

down the moldy steps to hell!

Why! Brown bodies  
turn your mouth to drunken  
filthy ways.

Brown bodies! You are no better  
than the worst

white man I know.

No better than myself!

Now I must ask God  
to forgive me for not knowing  
you so well.

And forgive you

For what?

For killing black-skinned girls  
in lazy fires at Auschwitz!  
Or can you resurrect this  
lump of wind and clotted heart?



## THE DESIGN

A spider, delicate, articulate  
silent loops a subtle whisker of her thread  
through passages spun with sun

I watch him chop a cord of wood each day  
and night to settle in his work to feel each  
thread and watch it lit by moonlight to its source



## REBIRTH

For a moment in time  
life is no goal journey--  
the mind making immortality  
out of sticks and air.  
Wasted consciousness ends  
like wind drawn from a tank.  
The mechanical nature of the cells  
grows quiet in a rust that  
spiders and kudzu crawl over.  
It ends and all that went before and  
that can follow are lost with a toothless  
slipping away--a silent vegetable time.  
Inertia stops in  
a cold farm house in cobwebs  
with the past hardly evident: And a poem  
crawls into the light from its momentary tomb  
where it waited dormant in the dirty oak floor.

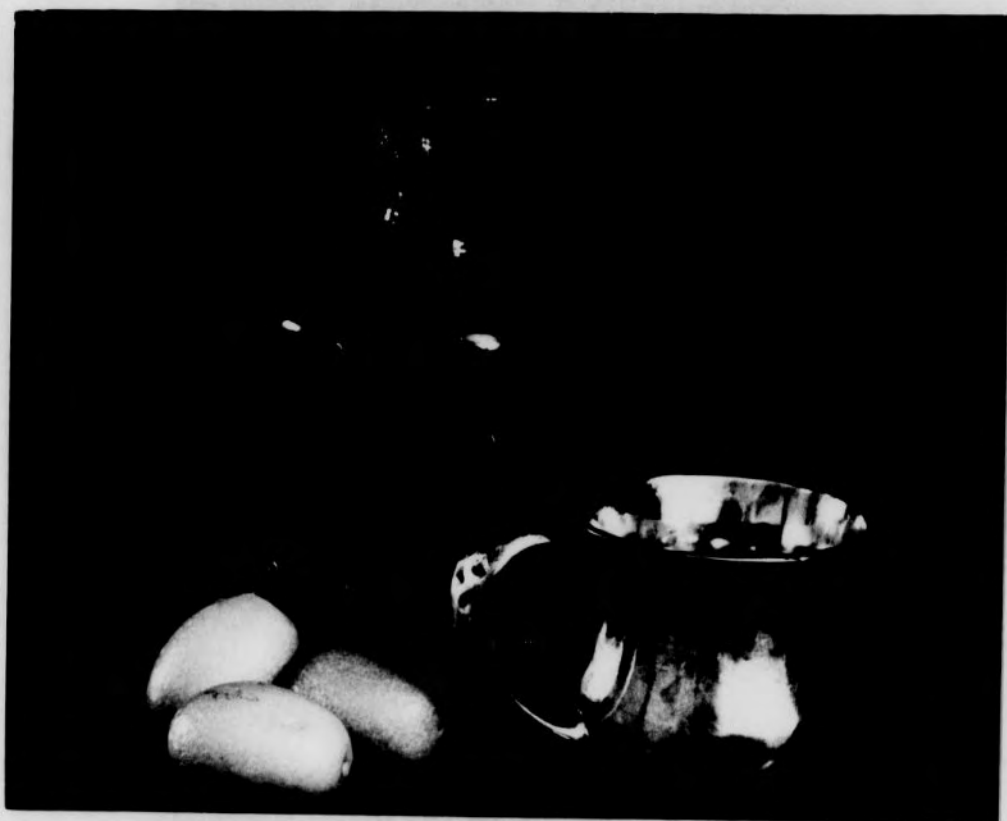


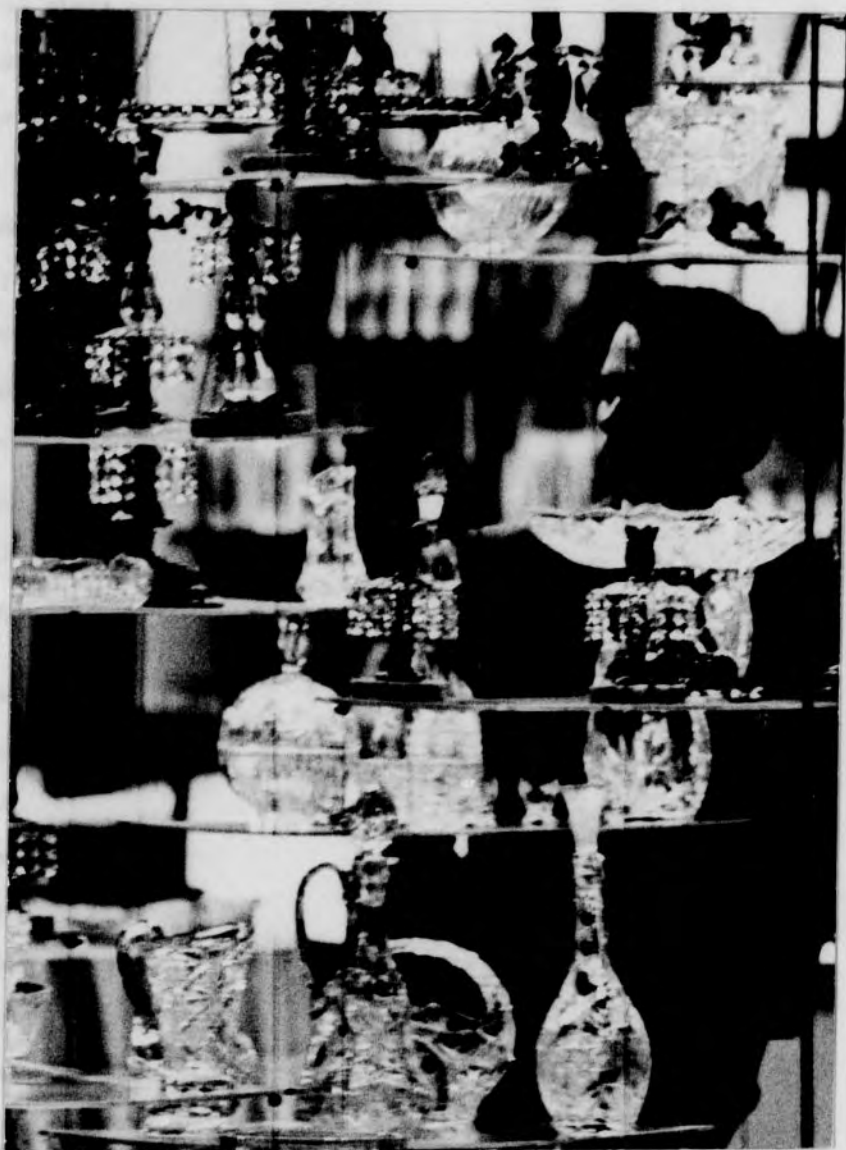


## THE RELATIVE

Her drawn face was sixteen  
or thirty-five if she were not  
your relative if she were not  
a child without a soul if she  
were not unscrewed from an  
alien planet gasping for a  
presentiment of hope to erase  
the needle marks  
from her grotesque vision.  
She could pitch face-first into  
a writhing jungle of nerve endings  
pulsing back and forth  
hot as a molten retina focused on  
the sun. But if she did halt  
the madness of electrons  
and neutralize the chemistry of terror  
where would she go to seek  
her new sanity? Where could she  
find her news of peace and hope  
for the disillusioned?  
Who would hold her without  
a latent madness  
tripping her frail thoughts once again?







## THE GLASS CANDIDATE

The glass candidate  
is a man,  
is a fragile mask of glass,  
a crystal face  
carved in preoccupation  
trembling at the precipice  
of civilization,  
frightened by the harmony  
of a goblet,  
surpassed by the indomitable  
quiet light of the silver-  
service sheltered in dark wood.

The glass candidate  
is a man,  
for a moment balanced,  
inertialess,  
still civil near madness,  
the ears turned in to the soul,  
waiting for a wine glass  
dropped in a well.

The glass candidate  
is a man,  
waiting for the right hand  
to balance the left,

the wrong choice made neutral  
by the right,  
awaiting the convergence of two  
as one,  
enduring the tension  
of reality,  
crashing silently,  
almost imperceptibly  
toward the harmony of darkness.





## THE FEELING OF OYSTERS AND SUN

There is old wood in the feeling  
of oysters and sun:

Caked rusting nails poked  
in the marsh winds.

There is old blood in the energy  
passing her stern:

Dependable as silence, as reticent as  
death into a young thing.

And there are discarded skins,  
and the footprints of crows appear  
behind the corners of the eyes,  
and the last face has begun to form.

And the beautiful spirits of ancient things  
rise in the smell of salt from the living stream  
to remember the mutual feelings between oysters,  
and beyond to suns.





## EVERYONE HAS A PRICE

God is seeping from my veins and

my soul is rusting in salt.

My lungs inhale the tarantula air,  
and living is nausea in a soundless  
mirror--a groin lying in the black  
of a soulless room.

Yet light is death! Breath is dying.

Sound is frenzy. And vision spins  
a top off into a vacuum of madness.

Familiar things scream hypocrite,  
and there is a perfunctory search  
for Truth.

Turned on like concussion  
the Ninth is dry and maiming  
and my heart fills with horror  
as voices crackle at the ethereal  
level of my lost God.

My mind has slipped over the precipice.

I have chosen. Ounces  
are won over tones and silence.

Tons are proven salt inside  
the arm--

Pinching ants from pouring

things and men.

Serendipity

from the ash of a cigarette.

"What is the God you believe in?"

asked the quiet Jew,

"Is he of Rhine or Elbe or of pink champagne?"

Does he drink coffee or tea?"

Through windows the streets of Philadelphia

slipped invading old ladies

from the clothes of their beds. Dear burning shadows slipped

gently into night with the doorbells under their arms.

"He is an experience I had . . .," answered a witch

becoming a face in the dark, under a tongue looking

for words, while the brain slipped into lower ideas.

And they began the cross with the language

that failed in a fifth grade English class:

Words that turned into war and finally murder across a

double-barrel living room. An immortal pitted against

a mob tongue. Blind faith tripping up on a language

designed this side of infinity, with ideas as chaplains

as existence. And a frustrated fist rose up in the dark,

and crashed on the door, slid away!

## BELIEVING IN SOMETHING

Two faces sat down in the dark,  
behind bourbon,  
shaped in preconceived frames.

"What is the God you believe in?"

asked the quiet Jew,

"Is he of Rhino or Elf or of pink champagne?"

Does he drink coffee or tea!"

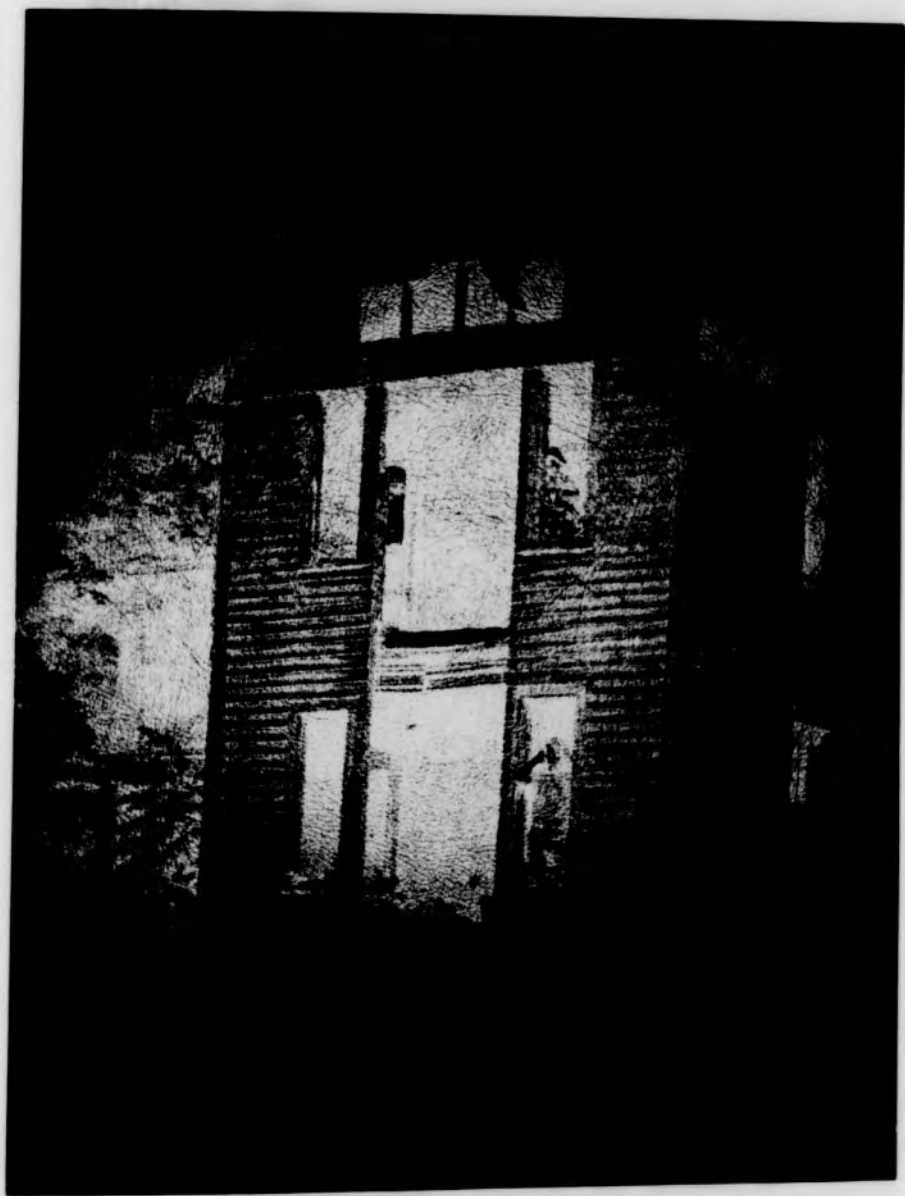
Through windows the streets of Philadelphia  
climbed inveigling old ladies  
from the clothes of their beds. Door buzzing shadows slipped  
gently into night with the doorbells under their arms.

"He is an experience I had . . . ," answered a twitch  
becoming a face in the dark, under a tongue looking  
for words, while the brain slipped into looser ideas.

And they began the cross with the language  
that failed in a fifth grade English class:  
Words that turned into war and family murder across a  
double-barrel living room. An iconoclast pitted against  
a numb tongue. Blind faith tripping up on a language  
designed this side of infinity, with ideas as shapeless  
as existence. And a frustrated fist rose up in the dark,  
and crashed on the door, slid away!

The Jew sat poised and still, his brain in his skin  
and his eyes, thrusting his ear in an echo, as hushed as  
a baby learning. And an arm glistened out through the dark  
and on through the bathroom door. And God was a flash  
of free-falling glass, in the grin of a crumbling town.

Two faces slipped back into darkness  
waiting for a sentence to start its trek again.  
Waiting for a word to pass from one brain into the other--  
For ideas to travel through an abysmal black air  
to reassemble themselves in a skeptic  
with a skeleton and wild white hair!



THE SCHOOL BUILDING, UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO, TORONTO, CANADA. THE BUILDING  
WAS DESIGNED BY THE ARCHITECT FREDERICK W. MANNING.

## FOUL-WEATHER SOUL

On that gray day    That drab day  
When the light stayed in the mirror  
His foul-weather soul came to his room!  
Came by his sick bed with soup and lemon  
for his hair    For the light had died  
at the top of the hall with lack of sunlight  
in the wind    Into cold acres of his heart  
Congealed With the footprints of jackals  
in a room with no door    A gray desk in its center  
A cold desk    Taunting the drawers full of trivia  
cursing the chair    His psychosis held in check  
by a paper weight    A cold flameless zone  
kept aching with the light of a burnt out match  
in his chest    It was his foul-weather soul  
So cold in its threadbare jacket of silk  
A pocket full of anger left from a love:  
"Come back my only soul!"    I know I heard the sound!  
"The rubber has slipped around my neck in the darkness  
My heart is naked in my mouth and my voice  
is vulnerable to sound:    Now enter this waste  
with the kick of your embryo    Stretch the corners of  
my mouth around the warm ball of spring    Around the corners  
of the sun    And lie with me on the pillow of winter's

cold edge for the energy of one fine instant!"

In silence the mirror released the light  
and there was the scent of lemon in the air.

And the gray beard of an old man

made a bony guide into the ice of a winding stair  
the smoke of a candle the only light into oblivion.



## THE YELLOW DUSK

There has been a buzzing  
 in my yellow dusks  
 for many days since the  
 Earth sank into the  
 darkness with its toes  
 out-stretched as if to  
 break a fall. And the  
 buzzing nears my ears  
 and whirrs away like  
 the sound of high voltage  
 somehow whirling at the  
 end of a very long string.  
 Each revolution  
 moves the buzzing  
 closer to my ear drum.  
 And I wonder why others  
 never seem to hear it  
 ever nearing from the  
 yellow skies. I know  
 that I will step too near  
 one early yellow night, and  
 that the buzzing vultures  
 then will cease their song.



BECOMING MUCH MORE THAN AIR  
(OR:WHAT A DIFFERENCE A FELONY COULD MAKE)

I feel had. Porous. Snails could slide into my  
flesh before I could mount a suitable defense.

If there is a hope at all, then it is smoke,  
and the wind of the fan blows my hair into crimes  
on my head, killing me with electric-chair hair,  
scenarios of murder and rape in the space between  
my eyes. Leaning into smoke I imagine

I am impervious to the beaks of the Judge's  
occasional glance. I am had! In a cool thin sort of  
way I am had:

Like a wind divided by a fountain pen, or water through  
folded hands, slowly producing blindness to the daggers  
always there, time rounding the points of my nervous system.  
Grindstone on a callus. Heart thumping in my lap,  
wrapped in gauze.

I am had! I am weak from the temporary loss of a drop  
of blood, the cells of two years maturing. My face is  
marbling, bloodless--everything gone to my feet for hope  
between my toes. Gone to my eyes for a single tear  
to spread on a parchment tongue.

I've been had by a fallible judgment, gradually inducing  
the shape of a soul from my skin.

Sure! Stones can pass through me now, I am much more than air.

And a friend awaits me in the humility of a flaking mirror:

It seems I am home with no face to wear. My own.

For moments at least, I am there!

## POISON DEEDS INTO STONE HILLS

When all had been said  
and the poison deeds were  
done, there was a hearse  
waiting by the curb, and  
those who had said the  
most were not excused  
from the last black drive  
into stone hills. And  
those whose voices were  
inconsummate were  
led away as well. And  
I who had listened and  
grimaced often at their  
talk, who had watched  
intently for the hearse's coming--  
I who had trembled when it  
took them everyone before me--  
I waited by the curb one day,  
and whimpering once when my  
turn came, and all the poison  
deeds were done, I went away.



A SINGLE SEED came from silence,  
swirling up through the rock  
Once grazing close to the tile bottom  
of the pool,  
the water too thick to breathe,  
I thought of air  
freshly,  
for the first time  
feeling it slam into my lungs,  
saying, "live!"

After I coughed the last drop  
of death back into the drain,  
air came and went easily,  
and there was no problem getting  
all that I needed.

And air was just an invisible friend,  
until one day I watched an old man  
willing the entrance of oxygen,  
but filling his mouth with a single  
seed. . .

And it was blown from silence,  
whistling up through the room  
into my waiting nostril . . .  
Slam-bang from the bottom of  
his ended lungs  
into the fresh blood  
of a Monday morning.











## THE DEATH OF MRS. NIBS

It grates like laughter at a hanging.

You relative of Auschwitz!

So you are not ready for this portrait!

For among these things of the Earth

Mrs. Nibs was a special one — a "Tiger Cat" —

If Jean Le Negre IS African.

If Wife IS Primate. If Mother IS Caucasian.

Then only is she Tiger Cat.

For there were her deep and bisected eyes,

retaining the raw meat and the claw,

containing the feel of human hands and the smell

of the oyster on the neckless of pearls.

Mrs. Nibs was a child round her neck,

and she stalked the pterodactyls feeding in the back yard —

yet followed the rattle of cat-chow, crossing over

from the ancient to more than domestic.

Don't ask a stranger to explain why your child is human,

for life is no more than a living thing.

And every cry of death returns to a single brain

to register agony and fear. And a single heart and

pair of eyes search wildly for a star, or a fly

crawling on the sun . . . It is then that there are no phylums,

no species, no races or colors. The striped fur will slump

with the pale yellow skin of the Buddest priest.

And if you see the dying, and ply the chest  
for the reflex volume of air, you can see in  
the distant confusion of the eyes, the great amoeboid One,  
swallowing and heaving, growing larger with the wind of  
gnats's wings, the limbs of men,  
and the terrible claws into darkness.





## GLASS CASKETS

There is a method  
in looking back across the past  
to view the future from a different soul  
than wore your name  
when first came the feeling of light and time  
as a spec  
in the initial eye.  
For how many have shared their maps?  
Or how many voices come now  
from that back room  
out of one of us?  
Borne on by the pain of  
stopping too long  
on too small a foot  
where momentum has named no limits as air.  
A million little girls take Alice  
into their dreams  
While Napoleon lies in state for great soldiers  
and little boys to assimilate with awe.  
With the view from glass caskets  
playing quietly on the vaults of  
unnamed embryos.





## SAND

Little yellow oval photograph  
from Nineteen-Hundred-and-Five.  
Beautiful child-bride of a city prince.  
And only fifty years since Sherman burned  
down the South!  
Now at eighty-six she must know more  
about being a bride then in Atlanta  
than this incredible little oval can reveal.  
I've copied the image, enlarging it every way  
that I can — with several different films and papers  
and a whole range of exposure times —  
In every one there is the beautiful shine  
of the eyes — staring through all the bitterness  
and joy of sixty-six years.  
And though she has been "old" since several afghans-ago,  
I am afraid to show her the pictures I have made of her,  
with grainy skin and the neckless fading into the paper's edge.  
For there must be still in her mirror,  
every now and then, the beautiful face — before the chemicals  
began to fade, and before the grain started to spring up  
like sand — When the bright transparent eyes felt lovely,  
and gazed out upon Atlanta  
with the innocence of a young girl.



## LITTLE ALTAR BOYS

Little altar boys

you look familiar this morning.

But not because I watched you

squirm two services ago.

And did you know?

You three are handsome

the skin of Italy like

your father who speaks

of everlasting things — of Peter,

the Church synonomous,

of Christ the eternal King.

And you? You do not see

yourselves in us growing old

before you? We who visit

church each Sabbath

To take the gift of Christ.

Do you not see us passing on,

you cherubim children who sit

with poise and watch us search

for something we may leave behind?

I think that you are we,

that I am you but older.

Now you must stay to give

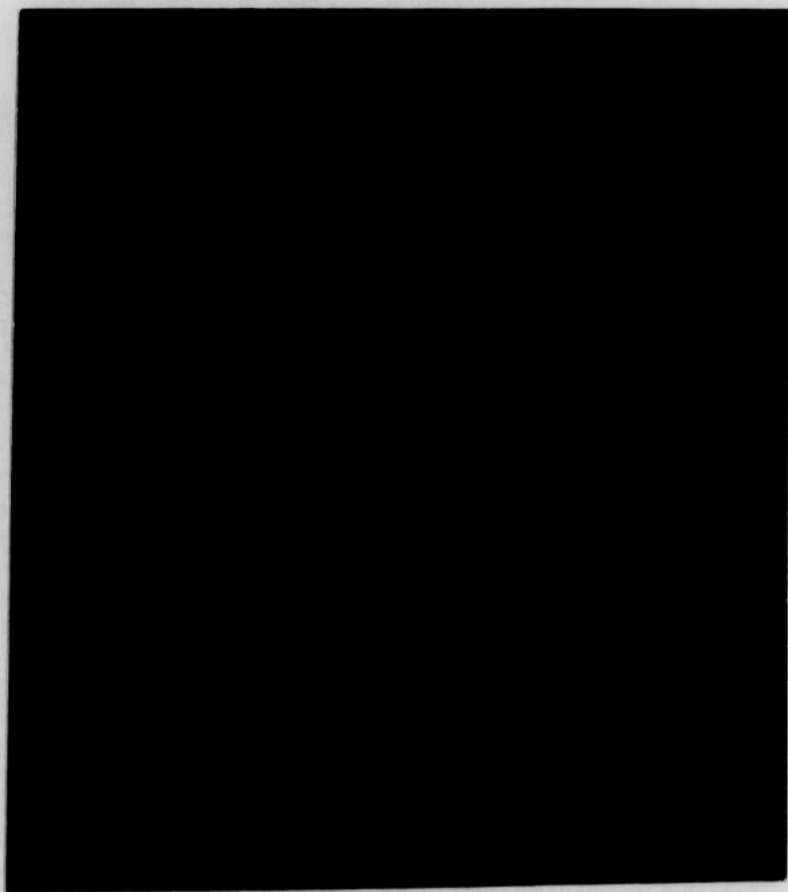
us eternal age. For we are memories

soon, when you are men. And if  
it be hell we leave behind, then we will  
watch it grow in your clean faces!

-2. THE FOLLOWING INFORMATION IS

WAGNER, FRANK J. (1914-1978)

1914-1978



-A WELL MARKED NIGHTMARE-

The grave with all its  
unwelcomed possessions of living  
is a simple step away  
illuminated clearly by the street light  
on the corner beneath the maple tree.  
It is the night, and nightmares  
of this day, where shotguns have no  
powder, and Russian women lead  
a coterie of body snatchers  
through the blackness, that sweats up  
salt on my forehead and raises  
my pulse. I think the bourbon  
left a message in my blood  
that I had drunk my night away  
fearing failure at a dozen  
common tasks, like loving. Yes, the grave  
is quite plainly marked, in spite  
of nightmares where the dead are  
never corpses. It is the pause  
before that final step beneath  
the maple, the pause in the shadows,  
where no step is plainly marked,  
that I must find a way through.



## THE PLACEMENT OF STONES

The shadow of the father slips  
 silently over the rocks and up to  
 the water's edge. The son stands  
 straight and still listening to the  
 sound of the water flowing near his  
 dry feet. Without turning he stakes  
 one foot in the icy cold and then  
 the other. The shadow slips away  
 leaving the stone, summer and fall,  
 echoing into the hillsides.

## NEW CELLS AND SILVER

Strange eight o'clock deathlike,  
 coming through thin walls. on the pupil of the eye,  
 The macabre harvest of softness of ether,  
 suicide in the cells. of vision again.

and the eyes and mind left and roamed  
 Come from a dream by the scratching  
 above the room staring at medical people.  
 of moths' wings on thin walls: mumbling,  
 The eye described the body stretched white  
 "My planet curls finally in ellipse,  
 in the corner across non-verbal space,  
 mute in a crucible of sound . . ."  
 and the word propped itself up on the lip

And then with the strange, without even telling the soul  
 silence of the chest. And in this first death  
 there was only the brilliant root in a rib,  
 sunlight of January crashing in w. There was no image,  
 the ears of the frozen ground. climbing into the casket,

no scent of wreaths snipped to dry up in silence.  
 The brothers hiked down to the lake  
 There was only the body detached from the soul  
 and fired a pistol full of a bank  
 at the socket, burst out like a bulb -  
 of bottles along the earthen dike.  
 A spiritless body alone on the table  
 Filled tighter with life than mere sons  
 being fixed up good as new, to die.  
 they were uncannily accurate  
 shooting from the hip. . .

of the empty room for the burst of  
 lights to wash the stage, for McBuff to  
 flail into life, for Lazarus to babble again



## ABSTRACTION AND SILENCE

An old man lay on a white table,  
a surgeon's scalpal poised on the pupil of the eye,  
slipping down into the softness of ether,  
cutting on the miracle of vision again.  
And the eyes and mind left and roamed  
above the room staring at medical people.  
The eye descried the body stretched white  
in the corner across non-verbal space,  
and the word propped itself up on the lip  
and prepared for the leap, without even telling the soul  
that it was time to go. And in this first death  
there was no fear of a flower root in a rib,  
or a hoar-frost cracking the brow. There was no image,  
this first time, of loved ones climbing into the casket,  
no scent of wreaths snipped to dry up in silence.  
There was only the body detached from the soul  
at the socket, burnt out like a bulb —  
A spiritless body alone on the table  
being fixed up good as new, to die.

Students wait in the shadows  
of the empty room for the burst of  
lights to wash the stage, for McDuff to  
flail into life, for Lazarus to babble again



with Eternity still whitehot in his brain.  
 They wait to see Dr. Mell burst onto his classroom stage  
 with a toedance and a song of eternity —  
 teaching wrong-side-out with the emotions of a child  
 spun on the gentlest tornado into the fairyland of Oz  
 (Inside of him was the Grammarian and the monologue of  
 the Bishop's Tomb — and Willie Loman returning to  
 the crackling quiet of the old wooden room).

But the beloved ones were returned to find a gargoyle  
 wrapped on a bone called death — in the last bed —  
 In the bed of birth and love. The bed for frightened  
 children returned from the black-blood behind their dreams.

And it was time to die. Time to die.  
 God damn time to die: And never did a thing.  
 January is a gray gray month for death.  
 And zero a cold place to slide from.

But this last time he climbed up alone  
 when the students were gone to their dreams.  
 He climbed to the rim of Aetna  
 with the shadow of hemlock cupped to his mouth,  
 to study the fire and the molten call  
 of the end of time,  
 bringing to the top of a deadly abyss  
 the Book describing Seasons — A season for life  
 and a season for death.

He wore a final mask along the rim of hours:  
Gritting his teeth on humiliation  
racing away on the track-shoes of the mind,  
screaming without a sound into the front of a wax face —  
back over his shoulder, slipping the lock of again.

Wait, watch it Mary! Don't hold his hand!  
He may be pointing to the Promised Land!  
Get back away Joe, now let him go  
sliding free through darkness to Jericho.  
OK! We must shake him now: "Tell us we are wrong!  
Tell us there's a heaven man,  
just move an eye--  
Point to the window man  
and we'll come by and by!  
Try one more fuse Tom--now screw it in tight.  
We'll try ten-thousand before we give up tonight!"

## A METHOD OF DEPARTURE

"Wait my brethren and stay nearby--

He's sinking fast now and soon will die.

Watch carefully his glasses so that he may see

us here beside him and set our minds at ease!

Wait, watch it Mary! Don't hold his hand!

He may be pointing to the Promised Land!

Get back away Joe, now let him go

sliding free through darkness to Jericho.

OK! We must shake him now: "Tell us we are wrong!

Tell us there's a heaven man,

just move an eye--

Point to the window man

and we'll come by and by!

Try one more fuse Tom--now screw it in tight.

We'll try ten-thousand before we give up tonight!"